

“Keep the Cat Free”

ISSUE 1477

FELIX



10.12.10

The student voice of Imperial College London since 1949

Photos © Imperial College London



SACKED BY EMAIL



Students and staff shocked as Life Sciences cuts hit department's most loved academics

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HIGHLIGHTS

On campus

Lunchtime concert

Imperial is privileged to receive the critically acclaimed Tamsin Waley-Cohen at the Wolfson Education Centre at Hammersmith. The Guardian has said she is a performer of "fearless intensity". Her performance, using the 1721 ex-Fenyves Stradivarius violin, will include works by Mozart and Ives. Open to all. Contact Andrea Robins, a.robins@imperial.ac.uk, for info.

Wolfson Education Centre, LT1
14 December 13:00-13:45

Carols by Candlelight

The Chaplaincy offer a chance to reflect on the term just past, as well as mince pie and drinks, at their annual Carol Service at Holy Trinity Church. It is completely free and people of all backgrounds are welcome. For further information email Andrew Wilson at a.wilson@imperial.ac.uk



Holy Trinity Church
15 December 18:00-19:00

Molecular medicine

The Regius Professor of Medicine Emeritus Sir David Weatherall will speak at the Inaugural Hammersmith Campus Christmas lecture on how past lessons on molecular medicine will help future developments in the field. A recipient of the prestigious Lasker Award in 2010, Sir Weatherall is renowned globally for his genetic research. Registration in advance. Contact Amy Cock, a.cock@imperial.ac.uk, for further information.

Commonwealth Building, WLT1
16 December 16:15 - 17:15

MERRY CHRISTMAS



No pervy Santa jokes or you'll have to sit on his 'knee'... Is that a pervy Santa joke? Oh no I have to sit on his knee don't I?

As we come to the end of the term, and the start of the holidays (yes!), I feel the need to thank the Felix team and the many dedicated contributors who have made Felix, in my opinion, a success. Week in and week out they give up their invaluable free time and as Editor, I know that the quality of the paper (and the stability of my sanity) is a testament to their talent. Thanks to you too, reader, without you this paper would be pointless. I hope that you have enjoyed this term and that you will find the time to contribute in the Spring. We always welcome your articles, suggestions and of course, criticisms.

Merry Christmas all.
Editor

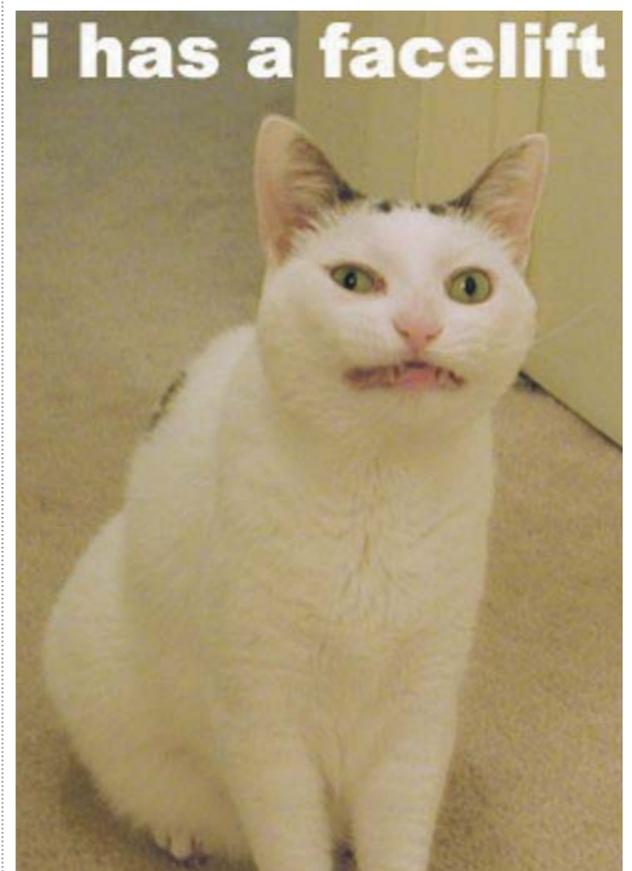
Union Notice

Union Council

1st Floor, Union Building
Monday 13 December 18:30

Although there are no specific papers being discussed apart from the usual monthly Sabbatical reports, it is still worth attending the Council meeting. Union President, Alexander Kendall, will be discussing the outcome of the Life Sciences restructuring student/staff meeting that happened this past Wednesday in his report. This a great opportunity to personally let the President know exactly what you thought of it. It is also a chance to directly speak to your Faculty representatives on Council and make sure that at all times they are representing your views in a democratic fashion.

Lolcat of teh week



FELIX

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The Term in Brief

Been following Felix news this term? No? Where have you been all this time? Labs? Ah ok Not to worry, we've summarised all the major goings-on to bring you up to speed. **By Navid Nabijou**

1. Death Sciences

(Ed - worst pun ever...)

At the end of term, we seem to be back to where we started; the Life Sciences restructure. There's no need for a summary here, see **Pages 4 – 9**.

2. The Explosion that Never Was

A spray-on-fabric lab in Chemical Engineering was closed temporarily on health and safety grounds. Rumours are now circulating that the closure is due to the spray containing dangerous materials, see **Page 10**.

3: Fair Effort, Could Do Better

Imperial students slammed the university's assessment standards in the National Student Survey. The Rector, Keith O'Nions, made the issue a top priority. A two-week deadline for marking and returning work was introduced, and, perhaps surprisingly, mostly adhered to.

4. Water, Water Everywhere

A PhD student ballsed-up, causing a massive flood in one of the Aero labs. Turns out sellotape and laser cooling supplies don't mix well.

5. Dossers of the World, Unite!

Lord Browne published his review into university funding, recommending a complete removal of the cap on undergraduate fees for home students, as well as a restructure of the student loans system. Much heckling ensued. A few weeks later the Government began to reveal its response to the review. Further heckling ensued. Whilst broadly supporting the recommendations of the Browne review, the Government rejected the notion of unlimited fees, proposing instead to treble the cap to £9,000. In its spending review, the Government

unveiled swinging cuts to higher education funding (though science spending was relatively spared). Angry students took to the streets and smashed up windows (resulting in some great photos for Felix). See picture (bottom left). Protests and sit-ins materialised up and down the country. On Thursday, the Commons voted on raising the fee cap, see **Page 11**.

6. Technology isn't Stealing Our Souls!

Professor Richard Thomas, of the Department of Mathematics, made innovative use of smart phones to keep his students awake in lectures.

7. Blurred Judgement

Oliver Frantzen's glasses got pinched. A mad chase through Hyde Park followed. Much hilarity ensued. The spectacle-bereft Imperial student will certainly go to extraordinary lengths to fit in. See picture (bottom right).

8. Shutting the Door in their Face and Shooting Themselves in the Foot

Though science was spared the worst of the cuts, the Government's separate plans to curb immigration could have dire consequences for research groups. Departments at Imperial could be facing the very real prospect of having to turn away exceptional candidates, simply because they cannot obtain a visa. More recently, the Government has suggested it may relax the restrictions somewhat, though how much help this will be remains unclear.

9. More Dangerous than Cycling in London?

Boris Korzh, Philip Lead-beater, Kunal Masania, Andrew McLellan and Jonathan Phillips embarked on an epic voyage to the Himalayas, scaling previously unconquered peaks. They were annoyingly nonchalant about the whole adventure. See picture (top).



These guys are pretty epic... or stupid. Mmm stupid makes me feel better about being a wimp... Yeah what idiots!



Does "I wish I was your boyfriend" work as a slogan?

An artist's impression of what a dude James Fletcher is

10. Too Much Willy?

Imperial definitely has a disproportionate amount of schlong: Imran Khan, Campaign for Science and Engineering director and Imperial alumnus, proclaimed science's dire need for diversity. He pointed to the small number of women in engineering and that less than one in ten black African applicants to Imperial were successful and warned that the marketisation of higher education would exacerbate these problems.

11. Justice for some

Israeli newspaper The Jerusalem Post attacked Imperial Islamic Society over the organisation of its "Justice Week", in particular criticising the choice of some controversial speakers. Concerns were raised over the event's rather narrow, Islam-centred conception of "justice" but the Islamic Society hit back, stating "Justice Week was inclusive and balanced". Much animosity ensued for a very short period of time.

12. Slow and Steady Wins the Race

Last but by no means least, FiveSix-Eight and Metric, the Union's new bar and club, opened, following a maelstrom of delays and setbacks: hidden asbestos, obstructing columns, you name it. Finally, though, the club opened to a triumphant first night where gratuitous amounts of non-consensual dry-humping occurred.

NEWS

News Editors: **Matt Colvin**
Alex Karapetian
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Staff and students rail against job cuts

Critics say teaching will be hit hardest as Life Sciences promise teaching review in January

Kadhim Shubber

16 academics have been made redundant in a controversial restructure of the Life Sciences department. The academics, who were informed of the decision via email, have until the 7th of January to decide whether to take a voluntary redundancy payoff or appeal and face forced redundancy with no significant payoff. Students and staff have reacted angrily to the cuts with one unaffected member of staff privately telling Felix that academics are "livid" and Emeritus Professor John Mansfield describing the whole process as "unfair, misguided and probably damaging".

The redundancies come at the end of a 5 month consultation process which began in July and was forced by a cut of £635,000 in the funding that the department receives from central College. The department, which has run a £1.5 million deficit this year, decided to dissolve two sections of research in order to maximize research revenue. Plant and Microbial Sciences and Cell Biology and Functional Genomics are to be replaced by an encompassing division of Integrative Cell Biology. The department defended its actions saying that they were forced to address the long-running Life Sciences deficit which they could no longer ignore.

A major campaign against the cuts has been led by Union President Alex Kendall in the strongest show of student activism at Imperial in years. Over 1,100 students and staff have signed a petition condemning the cuts. Over 400 students and members of staff turned up to a public meeting with the Head of the Life Sciences Department Ian Owens and the Head of the Natural Sciences Maggie Dallman to show their anger at the cuts.

Sacked by email

The method by which staff were informed of their redundancy has also been widely criticized. Letters were sent to those who "[the department] didn't think was a fit" while emails were sent to all members of staff in order to convey the information to staff at the same time. One member of staff, who is being made redundant, called the manner in which the staff were informed "absolutely shocking" and added "people have been here for a long time and there has been no acknowledgment of their service. We are extremely let down". Professor Owens defended the chosen method of communication, "The advantage of email is that everyone gets the news simultaneously, but obviously, receiving the news in such a way is gruesome." Some of the affected staff have worked at Imperial College for over 30 years.

Fears for teaching

The Union, students and members of staff from the department have raised major concerns, particularly about the impact the cuts will have on undergraduate and PhD-level teaching. Two Directors of Undergraduate Studies, two senior tutors and two admissions tutors have been made redundant. Alex Kendall said the changes put "the very running of the Undergraduate Biology and Biochemistry degrees" at risk. Students have also expressed their anger over the loss of arguably the most popular lecturers on the Biology and Biochemistry courses. Sheena Bungsraz, a third year biochemist, said, "the only word to describe how I feel (and I am sure others as well) is disgust. As an international student, I pay £20,000 to Imperial and expect to get a world-class education. We cannot and will not let this happen. Some of the lecturers being "made redundant" are the best ones I have had so far." Biology and biochemistry freshers in the public meeting went further and said that if they had known about the changes when applying, they "would have never come to Imperial in the first place".

The department has reaffirmed its commitment to high-quality research-led teaching and has assured students that the breadth and depth of the courses would be unaffected. Dr Pietro Spanu, a reader in Molecular Plant Pathology who hasn't been made redundant, said that he could not see how this could be the case. He said that the changes were "completely unsettling for all staff" and that it sent the message that a "heavy involvement in teaching will not be taken into account when the chips are down". The sentiment was shared by Emeritus Professor John Mansfield in a letter to the Head of Department Ian Owens: "Sadly, the present exercise sends out the clear signal that research income is the only parameter that really matters within IC. Anyone who takes on important roles in admin or teaching is making a big mistake in terms of job security."

There is significant uncertainty regarding undergraduate courses this year. Ian Owens told students that the remaining academics would be able to ensure that there was no change in the quality of teaching but Dr Spanu said that there was a "finite amount of capacity and goodwill" to shoulder the extra work.

"High-pressure environments may exacerbate a problem that already exists"

Jan Piotrowski



Packed: Skeptical students look on in G16, SAF as the Head of the Life Sciences, Ian Owens, ex

Those students on the MRes in Molecular Plant Biology and Biotechnology course are particularly affected. The staff have been told that they must leave by July 2011 but the 12-month course, which costs £19,800 for international students, does not end until October. Ian Owens tried to reassure students by guaranteeing that supervision would be provided on all masters courses. Additionally he hinted that there may be cases where staff are allowed to stay on past July 2011 to complete teaching duties. However it remains to be seen whether this will be the case. Course Representative Tejal Raval said that choosing to do a masters at Imperial is "proving to be one of the worst decisions we could have made." He said that there was anger at the lack of information given to students: "Everything we know is through word of mouth. The university has forgotten us – its masters students!!" He added that the College "should be embarrassed by [its] actions".

In addition, PhD students have been left in limbo regarding the status of their doctorates. It is unknown whether they will be able to continue their research. Silvia Colucci, a 2nd year PhD student in the hard hit Cell Biology and Functional Genomics section, said that she felt misled about the restructure: "I was told not to worry about it but now my supervisor is being made redundant and I don't know if there is anybody else at Imperial who will be able to supervise me." Ian Owens agreed that the uncertainty was regrettable, but said that it was unavoidable until 7th January, by which point all of the affected staff will have decided the date at which they are leaving. However Silvia

expressed her anger at the "constant delaying of information. They are always telling us to wait and wait."

Additionally at the general public meeting, Ian Owens was asked by a postgraduate whether the department would provide all necessary funding and resources to students whose funding was tied to their research and researcher at Imperial. Asked for a categorical answer, Owens simply said "Yes."

Department promises no reduction in breadth or depth of degrees

The redundancies will have far-reaching consequences for a number of courses on the Biology and Biochemistry degree programmes. There are a significant number of modules and courses which are run by affected staff, in particular the module for Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions, 4 out of 5 of the staff currently teaching it are being made redundant. The department has made a firm commitment that the "breadth and depth" of the degree will not be affected. Ian Owens admitted that "losing good teachers will improve teaching, but the teaching review that we're starting in January", with student input, would. However, Dr. Spanu rejected his assurances saying that "the cuts are having such a deep impact, that inevitably courses will disappear".

Professor Owens admitted that running the teaching review after the restructure was not ideal, saying that "if it weren't for the cut [from College] in funding then we would have carried out a teaching review in the summer". He

NEWS



Explains the reasons for the departmental cuts

The impact on modules and courses

While the Department of Life Sciences maintain that their courses will retain the current “depth and breadth” despite the proposed changes, information has surfaced which claims that the number of staff involved in teaching is to be severely reduced, including those convening certain courses.

The full scale of the impact that the plans will have on teaching in Biochemistry have been revealed to Felix, with one member of affected staff warning that at least 25% of teaching for the entire degree programme being removed by the next academic year. The majority of courses across all three years of the Biochemistry and Biotechnology BSc are in line for staff losses.

Over the first year, all four core courses will suffer significant losses. Staff losses stand at 30% for Molecular Cell Biology 1, 35% for Biological Chemistry, 40% for Proteins and Enzymes and 50% for Molecular Biology. The conveners for Biological Chemistry and Molecular Biology 1 are also amongst those members of staff affected by the cuts.

Second year courses are comparatively less affected, with staff losses of 30% for Molecular Biology 2 and 50% for Molecular Cell Biology 2.



Head of Department Ian Owens says that the cuts to staff will not affect teaching, a claim fiercely disputed by students and staff in his department

The third year of the course is by far the most affected. While staff losses for Mechanisms of Gene Expression and the Biochemistry Final Year Project stand at 20%, the figure substantially increases for the remaining courses. Biotechnology and Business suffers 30% losses. There are losses totaling 80% for the courses Biochemical Pharmacology and Drug Action, Cellular Neuroscience and Molecular Neurobiology, advancing to 85% for Molecular Basis of Development and finally 90% for Advanced Topics in Plant Molecular Biology. The conveners of these listed third year courses have

all been affected by the cuts, apart from those in Mechanisms of Gene Expression and the Biochemistry Final Year Project.

The Department of Life Sciences defended these losses to staff and students on Wednesday, making a concerted effort to assure those concerned that the losses are not focused on adversely affecting undergraduate teaching, but are instead “exclusively research orientated”. Head of Department Ian Owens acknowledged to those in attendance at the group meeting that “teaching is incredibly important”.

In reference to the effect that the staff losses would have on undergraduate teaching across the department in general, Owens explained that, “[Life Sciences] hopes to have very few changes this year to teaching... essentially, there will be no changes”.

When asked by a member of the audience whether the staff losses meant that the number of options available to students would be halved, Owens claimed that “that’s not the case,” instead suggesting that following the changes, the result would be a “more stimulating, more relevant and better course.”

Matthew Colvin

admitted that some of the staff lost were “fantastic” but said that the changes were driven by a need to address the Department’s long running deficit. In the 2006/07 session, the department was running at a £12 million deficit before being cut down to £1.1 million last year. The fact that the deficit for the 2010/11 session raised for the first time in several years was admitted to have been a major factor behind the current decisions.

In separate news, the College announced a “£140 million innovation investment boost” caused through floating Imperial Innovation Group plc shares on the stock exchange. Additionally the College ran a £14.5 million surplus in 2009, up from £7.1million in 2008; the surplus is believed to have risen significantly in 2010. Maggie Dallman rejected the suggestion that the College didn’t spend enough money on teaching saying “We have invested more money in teaching and we don’t just sit on this surplus and do nothing with it”. She pointed to the quality of accommodation and the gym as proof and added “you [students] would complain about poor accommodation” if we diverted that money to teaching.

Plant Sciences ‘obliterated’

The cuts have been slammed as the end of Plant Sciences at Imperial, a claim that the department has strenuously denied. 9 out of 20 academics from the former Plant and Microbial Sciences (PMS) section have been lost while the impact on the now dissolved Cell Biology

and Functional Genomics (CBFG) section has been more dramatic; only 4 out of 9 academics remain.

The method by which the department targeted the sections has come under sustained attack. Both the Union and academics in the affected sections have criticized the department’s use of “spectacularly flawed” statistics to prove that the research output of PMS and CBFG is lower than other sections. The Union have posted data on their website which they claim shows that “there is no difference between research output and that there is a significant difference in teaching hours”. Further criticisms were made in relation to the relocation from the Wye Campus which began in 2004 and only ended this year. In his letter to Ian Owens, Professor John Mansfield said: “The impact of relocation has not been given adequate weighting. [...] To hold the view [that] there was no substantial disruption is simply an insult. [...] There has simply not been enough time since the relocation to allow the section to develop.” Ian Owens addressed both the above issues when he spoke to Felix in October, commenting that he had not seen signs that the section was returning to its previous 5-star research rating. In reference to claims of data misuse, Professor Owens declared: “I would not be presenting the data if I did not believe that it was statistically significant.”

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Staff Affected

Dr Simon Archer
Dr Gerard Bishop
Dr Robert Coutts
Dr Mahendra Deonarain
Dr Bart Feys
Dr Alex Grabov
Dr David Hartley
Dr Richard Murphy
Dr Kevin O’Hare
Dr Glen Powell
Dr Jane Saffell
Dr John Tippins
Dr Yuri Ushkaryov
Dr Rudiger Woscholski

IMPERIAL AWAKENS: Union leads resurgence of student activism

PAGE 6



Sponsored Editorial

More student cuts Discount haircuts for Imperial students at Fresh Hairdressers

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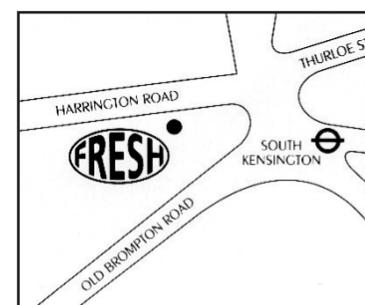
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NEWS

News Editors: **Matt Colvin**
Alex Karapetian
 news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Investments

£140 million investment boost to Imperial spin-out companies



A leading technological development company, Imperial Innovations, has announced that it intends to raise £140 million within the next two years, some of which will be used to fund research at Imperial College.

Imperial Innovations commercialises any scientific research and developments that are made in the university by finding a market for any products that Imperial researchers invent. A small proportion of its profits are invested back into research, enabling productive projects to fund themselves. It also helps to form and incubate spin off companies that stem from Imperial College research and developments.

Needless to say, research at Imperial is highly useful. Within the past year there have been 344 new inventions and 48 patents filed through Innovations, some of which have been greatly profitable for the university. The molecular drug, Respivot Limited, managed to raise £9.5 million in profit through sales last year. As a total, £211 million has been raised by developments since 2006, £49.7 million of which has been reinvested by Innovations.

Although Innovations specializes in business and investment, raising £140 million in 2 years is no easy task. The company intends to raise it through the sale of several million new shares to current investors in rights and warrant issues. Initial sales are predicted to raise £55 million in January 2011 and a further £74 million by January 2013. Further contributions will be made from the sale of other shares to new investors. The company has had a good track record so far, raising £14 million for Imperial last year and over £20 million in previous years without having to undergo rights issues since 2005.

Although Innovations declare the main aim of the funds to be to increase the size of investments in spin off companies, only 40% will go towards this. The remaining 60% will fund collaborations between Innovations and other technological development companies and spin offs. "The funds will also enable us to make investments in companies founded by or based on technologies from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge and University College." Martin Knight, chairman of Imperial Innovations, stated. Although collaboration may reduce the influence that Imperial has over Innovations, the rector, Sir Keith O Nions, welcomes the association with other universities, believing that it may lead to more joint research projects in the near future.

Unfortunately, the £56 million intended for Imperial is only for Imperial's associated spin off companies and areas of research already in the Innovations pipeline, so isn't accessible to other academic researchers.

Zainab Ali

Imperial finally awake

Normally silent students find their voice. By **Matthew Colvin**

When will Imperial march? was the question Felix asked last week. Government cuts to higher education and tuition fees of up to £9,000 had failed to bring out the inner revolutionary in the average Imperial student. What then would it take to inflame passions on campus? The answer arrived with a flurry of leaves on Wednesday, as hundreds of students took the Life Sciences department to account over what they see as the unjustified and unjustifiable cuts being made to what is, as the department itself admits, 'one of the largest life science groups in Europe'.

The first signs of trouble came on Imperial College Union's Facebook page where the ominous status "early indications of the outcome of the Life Sciences restructure show that Plant Sciences is no more" was posted on Friday 2 December. Details of the cuts quickly spread on Facebook (Julian Assange would be proud) and a chain reaction of outrage spread through statuses across the Imperial network. A campaign quickly followed as the Union organised a public meeting to discuss the cuts that the Head of the Life Sciences Department Ian Owens and Head of Faculty Maggie Dallman bravely agreed to attend. In a textbook example of crowd-sourcing, a protest was suggested. Defiant students would take the Plant Sciences Cuts straight to the College by dumping tomatoes, trees, leaves, twigs and all things 'plant' outside the Blue Cube. The activism doesn't end there however, with an online petition also being organized, making claims of 'faulty data analysis and lack of evidence'. Over 1100 signatures had been collected by the time of printing. Additionally so many people had planned to attend the public meeting (nearly 500) that an extra lecture theatre in the Sir Alexander Fleming building was booked to handle the overflow. With Facebook overrun by the red monkey of revolution (Viva La Evolucion!), there was a sense, on the eve of the showdown with the department, that something big was happening.

Both lecture theatres were packed. Students and staff crowded the aisles and sat on the floor, eager to hear what was to be said and to have their grievances aired and addressed. Taking the floor were Head of Department Ian Owens and Maggie Dallman, Principal of the Faculty of Natural Sciences. Professor Owens began proceedings by seeking to clarify the issue, ostensibly through the use of Powerpoint, though the slides were occasionally at the mercy of a fervent potted plant near the projector. Stressing that the "restructure is still an ongoing process", Owens outlined two keys aims that he

Afonso Campos



A 3rd year biochemist holds up a poster showing the symbol of the protests, the "Viva La Evolucion"

"Both lecture theatres were packed. Students and staff crowded the aisles and sat on the floor, eager to air their grievances"

hoped would be achieved through the process, that of improving the department's competitiveness both nationally and internationally and to reduce the department's £1.5 million deficit. Stating the reasoning behind the cuts, he declared that, "a couple of the groups are unlikely to improve to the level we required until we took drastic action". Students grew more and more restless as the hour drew on, with discontented chatting and a bored malaise blanketing the room. Professor Maggie Dallman was sure to move quickly through her speech as she sought to make the audience aware that the cuts were felt at every level, stating that she is "not some faceless administrator". She emphasised mentioned the "uncertainty" of the situation and the challenge that they have faced in making the decisions.

Questions were then invited from an eager audience. Hands shot up as PhD students de-

manded assurances about funding and recent graduates expressed their disgust at the loss of some of their best-loved lecturers. Ian Owens was sympathetic to the students, agreeing that the staff lost were great teachers but taking pains to emphasise that the decision was motivated by financial troubles. He tried to reassure the students that the department would come out of the restructure stronger, and continue to provide excellent teaching even though he admitted that "losing good teachers is difficult to cope with".

But at other points he was clearly on shakier territory. One student attacked Owens in response to his assurances that the department could survive. Said student provided the riposte, "I pay for an excellent degree, not to 'survive'." Passions grew as students refused to accept answers that they saw as slippery, calling out to Owens when they felt he had avoided a question. Repetitive answers began to anger the audience, with Owens frequently bringing up the "uncertainty" of the whole situation and repeating that he would not be able to comment on the cases of individual staff until January. The disgruntled audience were loath to wait and pressed him but he refused to comment further on specific courses, insisting that he had said all that he could.

Great cheers and rounds of whooping spread through the room as some questioners took the opportunity to skewer the Head of Department;

NEWS

ens



...ion" Red Monkey

one postgraduate student described with venom the "absolute disrespect" that he believes he and his colleagues have been treated with.

As the call for the last questions was announced, the students called for Kendall to land one last blow. Maggie Dallman initially refused, saying that Kendall could always speak to her easily and she wanted normal students to take full advantage of the opportunity to question her. However the roar of disapproval from the audience indicated clearly that they wanted their Union to have the last word. Kendall thanked the affected staff directly for their long commitment to the College and declared: "the choice (for affected staff) is between voluntary redundancy or an appeal, where they won't receive any money – what kind of choice is that?" This resulted in the loudest applause of the meeting, but also gave way to a sudden rise in tension, with several individuals asking further, more accusatory questions, with one shouting that the redundancy situation was "blackmail" and "threatening".

As the meeting wrapped up Kendall took once more to the front and asked if the students felt like their concerns had been allayed. The audience fired back a predictable "No!" and Kendall lifted up his 6ft Christmas Tree and led the students to the Faculty Building to construct their leafy memorial to the academics lost in the restructure.

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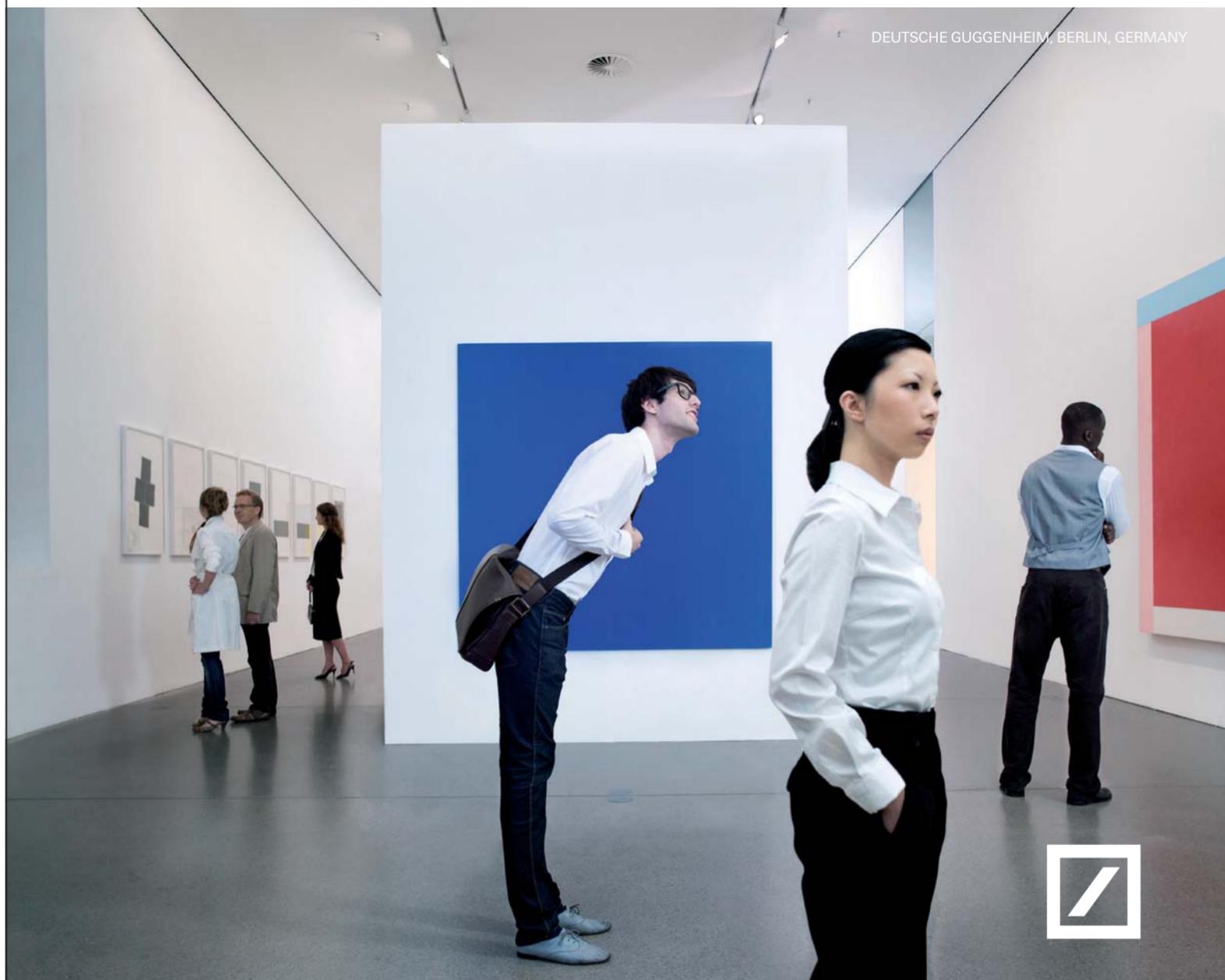
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Passion to Perform



NEWS

News Editors: **Matt Colvin**
Alex Karapetian
 news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

The human cost of the restructure

Kadhim Shubber



A student looks on at the plant protest outside the Faculty Building last Wednesday

Sophia David

The 14 academics lost to the Life Sciences department represent the most incredible array of talent, expertise and experience. The staff caught up in the restructuring, deemed unsuitable for the new department, have nevertheless contributed enormously to university life, being involved in teaching, career services and student welfare to name only a few areas. Felix considers what these individuals have brought to the university over many years and what will be missed.

Some of the lecturers were at Imperial before today's undergraduates were even born. A service of over 30 years to Imperial could save neither Dr John Tippins who joined in 1977, nor Dr Simon Archer who joined in 1978. These grim cuts serve as a reminder that Imperial is not immune to the economic problems felt at other universities and indeed around the country. John Tippins and Simon Archer are also the Directors of Undergraduate Studies (DUGS) of Biochemistry and Biology respectively. Both Senior Tutors are going, Dave Hartley (Biochemistry) being made redundant and John Rossiter (Biology) taking early retirement, as well as both Admissions Tutors, Ma-

“The department risks deterring students from applying to Imperial”

hendra Deonarain (Biochemistry) and Bart Feys (Biology). Such roles require years of experience and accumulation of expertise, yet it seems when it came to the cuts, their wealth of experience wasn't of sufficient value to the Department. Alex Kendall, President of Imperial College Union (ICU), insists these particular redundancies put “the very running of the Undergraduate Biology and Biochemistry degrees at risk”. However, the review panel maintains that these individuals can be replaced with existing staff. However Dr Pietro Spanu who has ‘survived’ the restructure questioned whether the remaining staff had the goodwill or capacity to fill the gaps left by outgoing staff.

The review so far has failed to consider teaching within the department of Life Sciences (the teaching review comes next term), but nevertheless the excluded lecturers include those considered by students to be “the very best”.

They are supposedly considered very highly by the university too, for example the long-standing John Tippins received the 2008 College Teaching Award, but again such excellence provided no safeguard.

In fact, across the board the teaching records of the affected lecturers are outstanding. To give another example from a possible many, Professor Jane Saffell, Senior Lecturer in Biochemistry since 2002, has received the Rector's Award for Excellence in Teaching as well as some of the highest SOLE scores in Biochemistry. She also designed and convenes a very popular final year course, Cellular Neuroscience, which was nominated for a national teaching award. Despite being the most over-subscribed Biochemistry course this year, there is the risk that Cellular Neuroscience will be removed from the options next year due to the loss of Professor Saffell.

It seems clear that having excellent research provided no guarantee of surviving the restructuring process either. The research must also have been deemed suitable for the new department, Integrative Cell Biology, a requirement criticised by lecturers as being “short-sighted”. The department however insists that Integrative Cell Biology is a

major area of research for the future but this too is disputed.

However there is no doubt that the neurobiology research undertaken by Jane Saffell is exceptional. Funded by The Wellcome Trust, Alzheimer's Research Trust and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) to name a few, it has resulted in regular publications as well as two patents protecting therapeutics for Alzheimer's disease and nerve regeneration.

Another example is Dr Mahendra Deonarain, a Reader in Antibody Technology (promoted this summer) who also co-founded an Imperial College spin-out Biotechnology company called PhotoBiotics in 2001. This develops and commercialises novel photodynamic therapy drugs and many inventions have been patented. Surely Imperial should be promoting business and entrepreneurship, yet the departure of Dr Deonarain marks the loss of an inspirational figure. There are serious doubts that the final year Biochemistry course, Biotechnology and Business, he designed will not continue after this year. Ian Owens has said that all courses will be under review when the Teaching Review begins in January.

The treatment of the staff has created a

lot of resentment. One staff member told Felix: “you can imagine how betrayed and angry staff feel about this, not only the ones who are directly affected.” Another commented that they felt “chewed up and spat out by [the] Life Sciences [Department]”. A member of the Biology department said the atmosphere in the SAF building was “simply horrendous”.

The informing of staff of their situation by email has certainly contributed to these feelings. Ian Owens explained that staff were informed both by post and email, the latter to ensure all were informed simultaneously.

Alex Kendall has also highlighted the “lack of real choice” the academics now face. They can either take a significant voluntary redundancy package, or appeal. If their appeal is unsuccessful they will only be given a small statutory redundancy.

So how will the Life Sciences department deal with losing so many highly-skilled teaching staff? Ian Owens commented that “losing good teachers is always difficult to cope with”, but “the department will survive as it has done before”, referring to the cuts made in 2004. He even hopes to improve teaching and provide “more stimulating, more relevant and better courses”.

NEWS

PhD Disruption

Nickolai Vysokov talks to Kadhim Shubber about the problems he's experiencing due to the Life Sciences cuts



What do you do?

I'm a self-funded PhD student from Russia. I am investigating the effect of synaptic proteins on neural circuits. I was a BioChem undergraduate at Imperial and let me say this, Dr Jane Saffell and Prof. Yuri Ushkaryov's final year modules are irreplaceable. Their teaching was fantastic and I bet Jane knows the name of every student in her classes.

What stage of your PhD are you at?

I technically started in September in the division of Cell and Molecular Biology but actually I started in January at the former Institute of Biomedical Engineering (IBE) which shut down over the summer. My supervisor there went to Newcastle but I couldn't follow him so therefore I changed supervisor to Prof. Yuri Ushkaryov.

So you will have to change supervisor for a 2nd time less than a year into your PhD?

Yes. When I started with Yuri I was aware of the restructuring but I was constantly re-assured that my research would fit into the new department and that my supervisor also fits but strangely

now it seems that's not the case.

What are your options?

Well officially, there's nothing happening until January and then I'll have until July to do, whatever, who knows. There's no-one else in the U.K. who has the necessary expertise to supervise my PhD effectively. I have to find a supervisor who is willing to experiment. Yuri was the only person after the move from the IBE who was willing to help me to do the research that I want to do. I'm paying money for this, I don't want to do a different area of research. I want to do the research that I'm interested in. If Yuri finds a position elsewhere I would go with him. Not only because of the expertise but also because I am getting tired of the way Imperial College is treating its staff and students.

How do you feel about the process?

I just got an email saying that some people had been affected. I didn't even know that my supervisor was affected, I first heard through word of mouth. This is the 2nd time that this has happened. I really don't know if I'm going to stay at Imperial now...

He insists that current staff will be able to cover the teaching of those lecturers made redundant. However students have queried whether this teaching can be delivered at the same high quality. Many of the lecturers made redundant actually developed and convened a course that specifically matches their field of expertise. Of course, others can teach the course but will this achieve the "more research-active approach to teaching" that the department claims to be striving for, if they are not active researchers on the material that they are teaching?

Additionally, the loss of academics who have each dedicated huge amounts of time to teaching has sent the wrong signals about the value of, say, Emeritus Professor John Mansfield and Dr Pietro Spanu. There was a clear message about how useful teaching was to the career

prospects of academics. How these sentiments will match with the increased workload as academics are forced to fill the gaps left is as yet unknown.

The department risks losing future staff and deterring students from applying to Imperial. Facebook is already riddled with outraged students and staff posting negative and potentially damaging comments about the university. One such user commented: "I have certainly advised at least 4 people who are applying to Imperial Biochemistry not to." Wednesday's public meeting was a positive step and Ian Owens and Maggie Dallman should get credit for meeting with students but the university and the department of Life Sciences must keep communicating effectively with both students and staff, who simply have felt cut out during this whole process.

The Top Ten Albums of 2010

Find out which albums made the cut on **Page 35**

(... a little hint, Kanye made it)



Corrections

The feature on mental health (Issue 1476 – 03.12.10) which included the articles entitled "Let's be more open about mental illness" and "How much support does Imperial provide?" erroneously neglected to attribute Katherine Bettany for the significant research and writing that she contributed.

The comment piece entitled "Flee! Flee the St John Ambulance service!" (Issue 1476 – 03.12.10) was printed with an incorrect pull-quote.

Editor

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LOCATION: LONDON

NEWS

News Editors: **Matt Colvin**
Alex Karapetian
news.felix@imperial.ac.uk

In brief

Lord Robert Winston lights the Menorah with Chabad



Lord Winston lighting the Menorah with Chabad South Ken director, Rabbi Mendy Loewenthal

Around 50 students and staff gathered on the Queen's Lawn Terrace of Imperial College's South Kensington campus to light the Menorah with Professor Lord Robert Winston.

Lord Winston had rushed straight from a vote in the House of Lords to light the Menorah. He spoke about the significance of Chanukah and mentioned an ancient Talmudic debate regarding the use of one of the Menorah's candles to light another.

The lighting had been organised by Chabad on Campus in South Kensington's director Rabbi Mendy Loewenthal. The Chabad had also organised a Menorah lighting outside the Gloucester Road underground station, which saw crowds of over 50 people attend its Sunday lighting, and a Menorah in the tunnel of the South Kensington underground station which was featured last year in the Imperial College staff newspaper "Reporter".

"This is positive event" said Rabbi Mendy Loewenthal, director of Chabad of South Kensington "people are happy to support the Menorah's message of freedom for all people and we like to promote it".

For more information on Chabad on Campus in South Kensington please visit www.SKchabad.com.

Need a job?

In March 2011, the Office of National Statistics will be carrying out a national census of the population living in England and Wales. As a result they are targeting students for an estimated 35,000 jobs across England and Wales. This includes 9,000 jobs in the East and South East of England as well as an additional 6,000 jobs in London. The census, which currently occurs every ten years, will create a range of temporary jobs including census coordinators, census collectors and special enumerators. Hourly wages range from £7.41 to £10.42 for census collector for example. Only UK Nationals, Commonwealth citizens, Nationals of the European Economic Area and Swiss or Turkish nationals are eligible. Go to census-jobs.co.uk for more information.

Explosion risk rumoured to be cause of spray-fabric lab closure

Charles Betts

An explosion risk is rumoured to be the cause of Prof Paul Luckham's Chemical Engineering laboratory closure in October. The laboratory was being used to test an innovative "spray-on-clothing" developed in conjunction with Dr Manel Torres. Scientists think the fabric, created through careful use of an aerosol, could have explosive applications not only in high fashion but in medicine and industry. The spray contains short fibres that are mixed with polymers and into a solvent, allowing it to be sprayed from a can. The texture of the fabric can be varied by using wool, linen or acrylic fibres. The fabric, which dries when it meets the skin, is very cold when it is sprayed on, a limitation that may frustrate hopes for spray-on underpants.

A spokesperson for Imperial stated at the time that "On Monday 11 October 2010, the College's Safety Director carried out a routine inspection of lab 433 in the Department of Chemical Engineering and Chemical Technology. During the inspection, the Safety Director found that a fume cupboard in the lab needed cleaning, and that the regulator on a gas cylinder needed replacing. As part of the College's health and safety protocol, the laboratory was closed to enable staff to carry out repairs."

However, an anonymous source has informed Felix that the spray contains a highly

Caroline Prew/Imperial College London



flammable substance called dimethylether. It is rumoured that the faulty fume cupboards resulted in a build-up of highly flammable vapours in the laboratory, resulting in a significant explosion risk.

Felix obtained a test can of the spray used for the "Science in Style Fashion Show" that took place in the Business School earlier in September. The can is labelled as "Spray for Testing

1st Edition". A warning on the can states that the contents are "extremely flammable" and "a source of ignition". When questioned on the matter, Prof Luckham declined to comment and advised Felix to contact the Imperial Press Office. The Press Office stated that their original statement remains unchanged, and would neither confirm nor deny whether there was an explosion risk in the laboratory.

Women in Surgery

Female surgeons: a rare breed, and the thought of whom still earns a curl of the upper lip from the (all too prevalent) misogynistic male medical students. Though medical school entrants comprise 55% female students, to this day only 8% of consultant surgeons are female. The Women in Surgery event, held by the ICSM Surgical Society on Tuesday evening sought to dispel some of the worries that plague female surgical students.

Miss Alexandra Cope, General Surgeon in the Oxford deanery described her career from student to registrar surgeon and remembered her purchase of a BMW Z3 as a real turning point in her surgical training career – "suddenly all the blokes viewed me differently, bizarrely it made me one of them."

The key speaker of the evening was Emeritus Professor Averil Mansfield CBE, the UK's first female professor of surgery. Described by the Guardian as "the first lady of the theatre", Professor

Saskia Verhagen



Mansfield held the position of Vice President of the Royal College of Surgeons from 1998-2000, was last year's President of the BMA and was the founder of WIST (Women In Surgical Training).

She regards the discrepancy of female surgeons as a "blip in history" – with a huge interest in the history of medicine, she described the historical depictions of women performing surgery from Ancient Greece and Mesopotamia to the Middle Ages; the first main objection and challenge that women faced in surgery was Henry VIII's flat refusal to allow women to be surgeons, "no carpenter, smith, weaver or woman shall ever practice surgery." From this point onwards,

women battled to be allowed to perform surgery. Only in 1910 did the Royal College of Surgeons change their entrance criteria, finally allowing women to take the MRCS exams; in 1911 the first woman was admitted – the centenary of this event is to be celebrated next year.

Both Miss Cope and Prof Mansfield agreed that work ought to be fulfilling, providing either men or women with something that they enjoy. Surgery is not simply a career choice, but something that both find a hugely important part of their lives. Miss Cope urged female medical students not to apologise for enjoying work – truly enjoying your career only enhances the experience of life.

Tuition fees rise to £9,000

Navid Nabijou

Jan Piotrowski

And so it has come to pass. After weeks of seemingly endless student protests, vicious exchanges across the House of Commons and many uneasy grumbles from within the Liberal Democrats, the Government's proposal to raise the tuition fee cap passed through the House of Commons late Thursday afternoon, with 323 votes for versus 302 against.

Under the terms of the proposal, the cap on tuition fees for home and EU students (currently standing at £3,290) will be almost trebled, to £9,000. This increase is, the Government claims, necessary in order to balance university finances and develop a "fairer" system of funding. Numerous critics have hit back, however, arguing that the increase will only be used to offset the cuts in public higher education funding – a massive 80% in some subjects.

Much of the anger has been directed towards the Liberal Democrats, who, prior to the election (in a move that has come back time and again to haunt them) pledged to abolish university fees entirely. Now enjoying the dubious pleasures of coalition rule, the party finds itself in support of a proposal that both its MPs and its supporters (many of them students) find fundamentally repellent.

Being the junior partner in the Coalition, the Lib Dems have already had to make many concessions – fiscal austerity, defence spending and immigration policy are but a few. All these – though marginally watered down from the Tory hard-line – nevertheless ran contrary to the Liberal Democrats' values. But for most of the party's MPs it was a price worth paying for their first position of power in living memory. However, rolling back on their promise to abolish fees seemed like a step too far. Thousands of students who supported the party in the last election took to the streets, expressing



ing an indignant sense of betrayal. In the face of this, Nick Clegg stood resolutely (though not altogether cheerfully) by the Coalition's plans. But many in his party were not convinced. A number of backbench MPs said that they would abstain from the vote; a few rebels even threat-

ened to vote against, contravening the rules of the Coalition Agreement.

In the end, for better or for worse, the rebels were capitulated. The Coalition's substantial majority in the House of Commons meant that those abstaining or opposing were not significant enough

to overcome the collective will. The motion passed with a majority of twenty-one; perhaps a narrower margin of victory than the Government expected, but a victory all the same.

Amongst the protestors marching on Whitehall for a fourth consecutive

week, the sentiment was less amicable. Although the result came as no surprise, it is bound to stoke further anger. It remains to be seen whether the relentless wave of student protests, that has of late engulfed that nation like wildfire, will burn on or fizz out.

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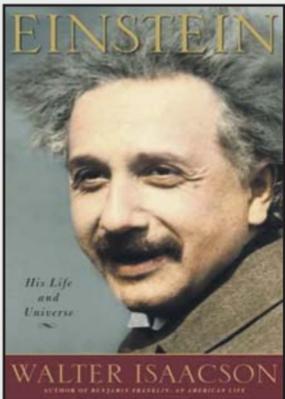
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SCIENCE

Science Editors: **James Goldsack**
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And a few suggestions...



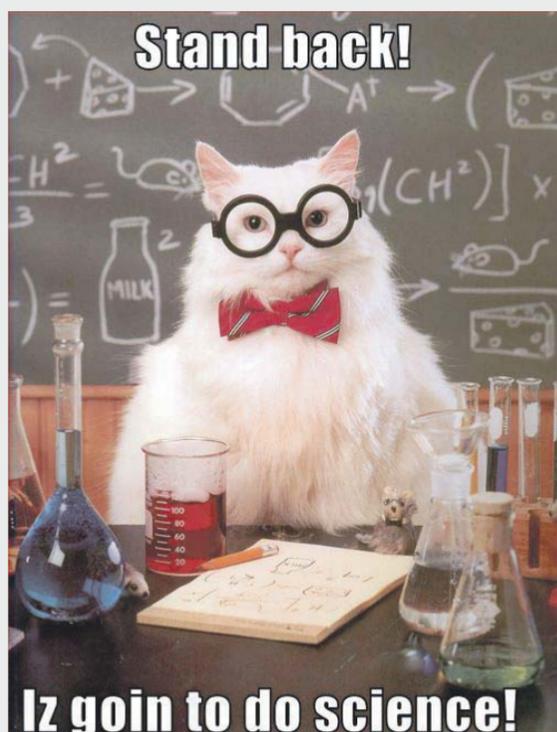
Einstein: His Life and Universe

by Walter Isaacson

The celebrated biographer Isaacson examines the remarkable life of “science’s preeminent poster boy” in this lucid account. Einstein’s dislike of his teachers’ penchant for rote learning was a reflection of his love of individual and intellectual freedom, championing the beliefs the author revisits as he relates his subject’s life and work in the context of world and political events, shaped by WWI and WWII and their aftermath through the Cold War. Isaacson presents Einstein’s research—his efforts to understand space and time, resulting in four extraordinary papers in 1905 that introduced the world to special relativity, and his later work on unified field theory — without equations and for the general reader. Isaacson focuses more on Einstein the man: charismatic and passionate, often careless about personal affairs; outspoken and unapologetic about his belief that no one should have to give up personal freedoms to support a state. Essentially, Isaacson reminds us why Einstein (1879–1955) remains one of the most celebrated figures of the 20th century.

Rojin Kiadeh

Schrödinger’s lolcat



Festive science facts

ROASTS:

One of the better aspects of Christmas is the food. A juicy roast is a must, and the process of roasting sets off many chemical reactions that few other methods can match.

Whatever meat you choose, it is the muscle tissue that you will be dying to tuck into. Muscle tissue normally consists of around 75% water, 20% protein, and 5% fat and carbohydrates. In raw meat, the proteins are coiled and relatively strongly bonded together. The oven acts as a thermodynamic reactor and once up to the necessary temperature, specific to the proteins in the meat, the bonds break and the proteins unravel and denature. This process makes the Christmas roast nice and tender.

But why does roasted meat taste so good? The answer is in one of the chemical reactions that takes place: the Maillard reaction. Discovered in 1912 by French chemist Louis Camille Maillard, this reaction takes place when carbohydrates, specifically sugar molecules, are heated, at roasting temperatures, with amino acids.

Many different compounds are formed as the carbonyl group of the sugar reacts with the amino group of the amino acid to form N-glycosylamine. These undergo Amadori rearrangement, an important organic isomerisation reaction that creates compounds with the same molecular formula but different structures, producing ketosamines. It is this group of molecules that not only produces the rich and delicious flavours we associate with roasted meat, but also the melanoidins which give the roast that golden brown colouring.

EFFECTS ON GENES:

The overindulgence at Christmas may damage your health in a rather surprising way. Your genes may be adversely affected by some of the foods traditionally eaten during the festive season.

Dr David Topping of CSIRO, Australia’s national science agency, warns that over consumption of certain nutrients can affect your DNA. “There is a school of thought which says that over nutrition leads to the production of molecular oxygen species that can lead to damage of the DNA,” he says.

Not only are there general dangers with any over consumption, but the traditional bird of choice, the turkey, seems to make matters worse. This inconspicuous meat is high in dietary protein. “We’ve shown that increasing the amount of protein will increase genetic damage to cells that line the large bowel,” explains Topping.

However, those of us who only like Christmas for the opportunity to gorge ourselves will be glad to hear that you can avoid this form of DNA damage by eating a specific dietary polysaccharide: the humble potato. Dr Topping says that starch that is not digested



Biology is useful for those “Merry Christmas, you’re adopted!” moments...

in the small intestine can produce protective compounds in the gut that prevent the damage.

HANGOVERS:

The most important thing about Christmas is the brilliant excuse to drink excessively. Sherry and mulled wine are the standard beverages but any alcoholic drink can lead to unwelcome side effects.

The hangover, technically known as *veisalgi* from the Hungarian word for “after night of too much fun you do not want to, and will not be able to remember” (*kveis*) and the Greek for “pain” (*algia*), is caused by the alcohol in the blood blocking the secretion of the hormone vasopressin from the pituitary gland.

When the hormone concentration in the blood drops, the kidneys send water directly to the bladder, acting as a diuretic and preventing the absorption of water. This diuretic effect leads to dehydration, which causes problems for the brain.

As blood flows through the brain, due to the low concentration of water in the blood, water is drawn out of the brain cells and shrinks the brain, causing it to pull away from the skull which ultimately causes the headache.

CHRISTMAS TREES:

The traditional real pine tree is slowly being replaced in homes up and down the country by fake, plastic Christmas trees. However, there is one good reason to appreciate the real thing.

Researchers have isolated a group of anti-inflammatory compounds in the bark of the Scotch pine, widely used as Christmas trees. The scientists say that these compounds could be developed into drugs to treat pain and arthritis.

The leader of the research group, chemistry professor Kalevi Pihlaja from the University of Turku in Finland, explains: “The preliminary study showed that highly purified preparations

of pine bark extract have potent anti-inflammatory effects. In the future, this may mean that people with arthritis may ease their pain by eating food supplements made from Christmas trees.

The researchers found that the compound extracted from the pines inhibits nitric oxide production, an excess of which has been linked to arthritis and circulatory problems, and also inhibits prostaglandin production, linked to arthritis and pain.

If you are suffering from pain or arthritis, it is probably still not a good idea to chomp your way through your tree.

REINDEERS AND SANTA CLAUS:

Roger Highfield, author of *Can Reindeer Fly?*, suggests that, in order for Santa to deliver the huge number of gifts in time, across the globe, he would have to achieve such high speeds that the forces on his body would be 17,500 times greater than gravity on the surface of the Earth and would crush him into a singularity.

However, Roger rightly points out that: “Santa is not dead. He delivers presents every year, as reliably as Rudolf’s nose is red.”

But why is Rudolf’s nose red? Despite being able to withstand crushing forces, Santa has been unable to cure the common cold.

Reindeer noses contain elaborate and highly concentrated folded membranes which act as heat exchangers. Cold air, when inhaled, is rapidly warmed by the blood in the membranes as it enters the body. The exhaled, warm air is cooled before leaving by the same process. This helps reindeers retain heat and minimise moisture loss.

However, this moist respiratory system makes a wonderful home for parasites and bacteria, including 20 known so far that are unique to reindeer. Odd Halversen of the University of Oslo has suggested in the journal *Parasitology Today* that the “celebrated discolouration” of Rudolf’s nose is probably due to a parasitic or bacterial infection of his respiratory system.

SCIENCE



Did you know that Wally went on to help Osama Bin Laden escape capture in Afghanistan? I guess people change

We are 7 billion

But how many could we be? You know, if we really 'went' for it...

Victoria Bignet

Our population has tripled within less than one generation. The major reasons are the crash in death rates as a consequence of controlling infectious disease, higher life-expectancy and better quality of life. We are projected to add another 3 billion by 2050; that is more than Europe, Africa, and both Americas combined. It is not about people having huge families, it is about one billion teenagers reaching reproductive age. If we keep this growth trend, human inequality and suffering will only increase, without mentioning the impact on the environment. We are the most intelligent species on the planet and we have a moral obligation to care for it.

Approximately 2 people are born every second, 200,000 every day, and 80 million every year. All need access to limited resources such as food, shelter, energy and water. Our history has been to overcome such limitations which, in other species, naturally balance out their relative abundance.

Population growth is often an ignored issue because it infringes on one of our most personal choices. This neglect puts our species at peril. The Earth has supported us so far; as we grew, we exploited its resources more effectively. Today, we are reaching its limits. Indeed, human density is a factor in any environmental issue. 1.3 billion people already lack access to clean drinking water, we

have to double food production by the end of the century, and oil demand is predicted to rise by 40% within the next two decades.

Rwanda's population is growing at a huge speed; it is predicted to double in 26 years. As 80% subsist on what they can grow, experts believe the genocide was strongly related to a too dense population and competition for scarce resources. Are we reaching our carrying capacity? William Rees has applied this ecological concept to man. He stresses that it totally depends on lifestyle. He has worked out the "productive bio-capacity" of the earth, measured as "global hectares (gh)". If we were to share this productivity evenly, there would be circa 2 gh per capita per year. But the reality is very different: Africa uses just above half of that share, the average Indian uses less than half, but Europe uses 4.55 gh with the UK on top averaging 5.33! The US use over 4 times their fair share.

So, if all humans lived like the average Indian, the Earth could support 15 billion people, and up to 18 billion if we consumed like the average Rwandan, but only 2.5 billion with the UK living standard and 1.5 billion with the American standards! Yet the picture may be even darker, since these calculations assume the availability of resource levels that are thought not to be sustainable for the near future.

We currently consume 1.5 'Earths' in

terms of sustainable capacity. Even in terms of waste degradation, the Earth cannot keep up! A good example is Poland's landfill mountains. People in developed countries need to give up a great deal of their consumption to give the ecological space for the needed growth in the Third World.

For example, it takes as much as 8,000 litres of water to produce a hamburger and 3,000 litres to produce a shirt – we can choose a path with a smaller footprint. Evidently, we must also switch to efficient and renewable technologies. But how to legally restrict the number of children a couple is allowed to have?

China introduced its successful One Child policy in 1979, following decades of famine. In 1977's India however, Indira Gandhi introduced a "crisis program": the penalisation for any crime was sterilisation. That year only, 8 million people were sterilised. Strong revolts brought the government down. This shows how easily perverted legal restrictions may be.

But there are other ways: educated women often choose to have fewer kids as they marry later. In Kerala, India, 1.5 children per household is standard. Unsurprisingly, the region has India's highest literacy rates, and the average marriage age is 28 in contrast with 18 across the rest of India. On top of enhanced education, contraception can perhaps also be used as a powerful technology to solve the population problem.

Barley disease sequenced

Research suggests genome parasites help adaption

James Goldsack

Researchers from the beleaguered Department of Life Sciences at Imperial College have sequenced the genome of a major fungal disease that affects cereal crops including barley. This breakthrough could advance our understanding of the evolution of plant diseases. The research suggests that parasites within the fungal genome help the disease adapt and evade the plant's defences.

The findings could help develop new agricultural techniques for protecting cereal crops. Barley is central to the brewing industry as well as being the basis of many staple foods, so ensuring the plants are disease-free is increasingly important.

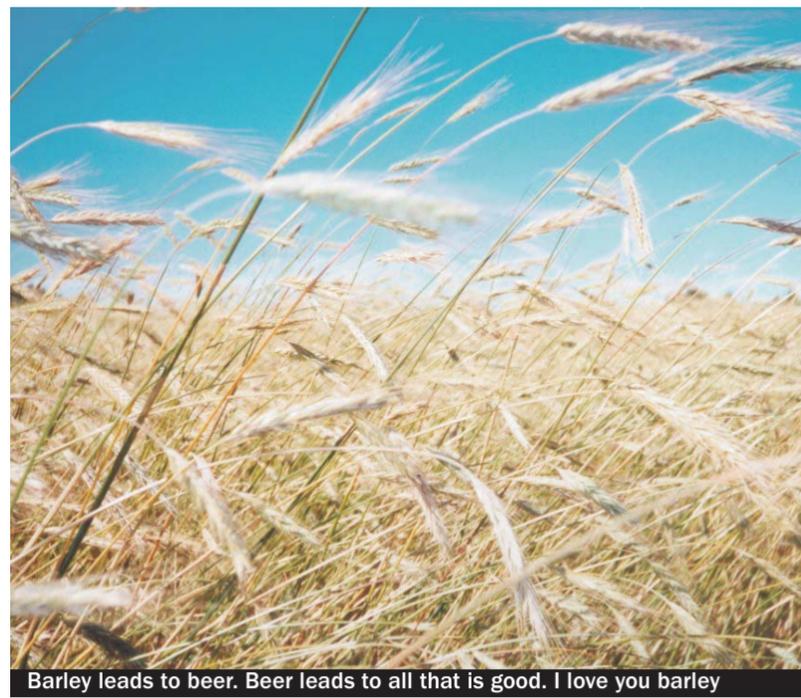
This research, led by Dr Pietro Spanu, decoded the genome of *Blumeria*, which causes powdery mildew. This affects many vegetables and cereal crops in northern Europe. Farmers use fungicides, genetically resistant varieties and crop rotation to prevent mildew epidemics, but the fungi often evolve too rapidly for these to be effective. This can occur because multiple parasites within the genome, known as 'transposons', help it to disguise itself and go unrecognised by the plant's defences. The transposons confuse the host plant by changing the target molecules that the plant uses to detect the onset of disease.

The team discovered that *Blumeria* has an unusually large number of transposons. "It was a big surprise," said Dr Spanu, "as a genome normally tries to keep its transposons under control. But in these genomes, one of the controls has been lifted. We think it might be an adaptive advantage for them to have these genomic parasites, as it allows the pathogens to respond more rapidly to the plant's evolution and defeat the immune system."

"With this knowledge of the genome we can now rapidly identify which genes have mutated, and then can select plant varieties that are more resistant," said Dr Spanu. "We'll be able to develop more efficient ways to monitor and understand the emergence of resistance, and ultimately to design more effective and durable control measures."

Mildew pathogens are 'obligate' parasites, completely dependent on their plant hosts for survival. This dependence is why the pathogens have had to devise a way to disguise themselves.

"We've now found this happening in lots of fungi and fungal-like organisms that are obligate pathogens," said Dr Spanu, adding that the costly genome inflation could therefore be a trade-off that makes these pathogens successful. "Non-obligate pathogens are not so dependent on their hosts, as they can live elsewhere," said Dr Spanu, "so they are less dependent on rapid evolution."



Barley leads to beer. Beer leads to all that is good. I love you barley

SCIENCE

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In Brief

We could be next...



It is commonly believed that our scaly predecessors, the dinosaurs, were wiped out by an asteroid storm. Well forget that, because recent analysis of asteroids has thrown up some results which could actually give tabloids a legitimate reason to think we're all going to die.

You may be thinking that death by asteroid is just a bit ridiculous, but the threat is serious enough that last year the US air force, for the first time, brought together scientists, military officers and emergency-response officials to analyse its ability to cope, should this scenario take place. There are already plans in place by governments all over the world to deal with different emergency situations, but being hit by an asteroid is not one of them. On top of this our warning systems are almost useless. In 2008 when a car sized asteroid exploded above Sudan, astronomers received only 20 hours notice.

Fortunately, the prediction that the 20-million tonne asteroid Apophis will possibly impact earth in 2029 has now been ruled out. That's good news if you're already in your 80s or so, however for those of us still alive in April 2036, there is a 1 in 45,000 chance of Apophis colliding with Earth. Now, being the person who never paid any attention in statistics, I wouldn't know if that's a particularly high chance or not, but either way I'd rather not die by asteroid.

Anyone directly exposed to an asteroid collision would be burned and pulverised by a supersonic shock wave, while the rest of the world would only have to deal with tsunamis, global firestorms, ozone holes and some seriously nasty acid rain, as well as the possibility of living without electricity.

Our best option? Deflect it, but this would have to be done years, not 20 hours, in advance. Then again, we could try to nuke it, but that would only break it into pieces, some of which would still be large enough to create disasters, others destroying our satellites.

I hate to admit to it, but maybe just this once we should follow in the footsteps of America and start considering our options seriously. After all, leaving our survival in the hands of the USA is never a good option, even at the best of times. **Alice Yang**

You won't believe it...

Mercury 'turns' some wetland birds homosexual. Scientists in Florida and Sri Lanka studied the effect of mercury in the birds' diet to find out why the chemical reduces breeding. It was previously known that mercury contamination can affect animal development but the researchers were surprised by their "strange" results. The higher the dose of mercury given to the birds, the more likely a male bird was to pair with another male. "We knew mercury could depress their testosterone levels," explained Dr Peter Frederick, leader of the study. "But we didn't expect this."

Supervolcanoes

Are we distracted by spectacular hypothetical disasters whilst ignoring the mundane ones occurring right now?



Yellowstone National Park: It is believed that a supervolcano could erupt from beneath the U.S. national park and basically wreck everything. Including Justin Bieber... Which is why we have to nuke Yellowstone. Protect the Bieber at all costs!!!

Matthew Parker

If, like me, your entire scientific knowledge of this subject extends to the silly BBC drama about supervolcanoes called *Supervolcano*, you should be terrified at the long overdue volcanic eruptions to end all eruptions. A great deal was made that Yellowstone's last three eruptions have taken place 2.1, 1.3 and 0.64 million years ago – we're all living on borrowed time.

The problem is, volcanic eruptions are hard to predict at the best of times. Just because a particular volcano has erupted after two 'regular' intervals it doesn't mean much statistically because there are an awful lot of eruptions that don't show any pattern at all and two intervals is little evidence to go on. Or if we do believe them to be accurate, there is still a margin of error of 140,000 years. That's longer than the entirety of human history. In the last 60,000 years we've had ice ages, mass extinctions and, yes, supervolcanoes.

This is a long time for a margin of error. Yellowstone is only one volcano, but the 'average' interval between eruptions

"You might want to think, for example, if you really need to cross so many roads on your way into college. After all, if it's been a very long time since anything last happened..."

is 800,000 years (so we're under-due). Of course, that figure is equally meaningless, and it's quite possible that an eruption will take place next year, or in the next decade. The point is it's hard to worry about something you can't predict years in advance and is very unlikely.

Of course eventually a supervolcano will erupt and those living then will have a miserable time but there are many things that can happen in that time, and

some of them (climate change, food crisis, pandemic) are a lot more likely and potentially a lot more dangerous than a volcano.

One thing such scientific documentaries as *"The Core"* and *"Megafault"* missed is there is very little that we can do to prevent a volcanic eruption, even if you know what's coming. I'm certain that careful, co-ordinated preparation would go a long way in reducing the devastating impacts, but until it comes to pass maybe recycling more, doing some light exercise, not taking antibiotics when you have a cold and not drinking too much are much better at lengthening your chances of survival. And even if it doesn't improve your quality of life, it certainly won't make that eruption come any quicker.

Focusing on something that may harm you in thousands of years, though serious, is less important than many other things that are much more dangerous. You might want to think, for example, if you really need to cross so many roads on your way into college. After all, if it's been a very long time since anything last happened...

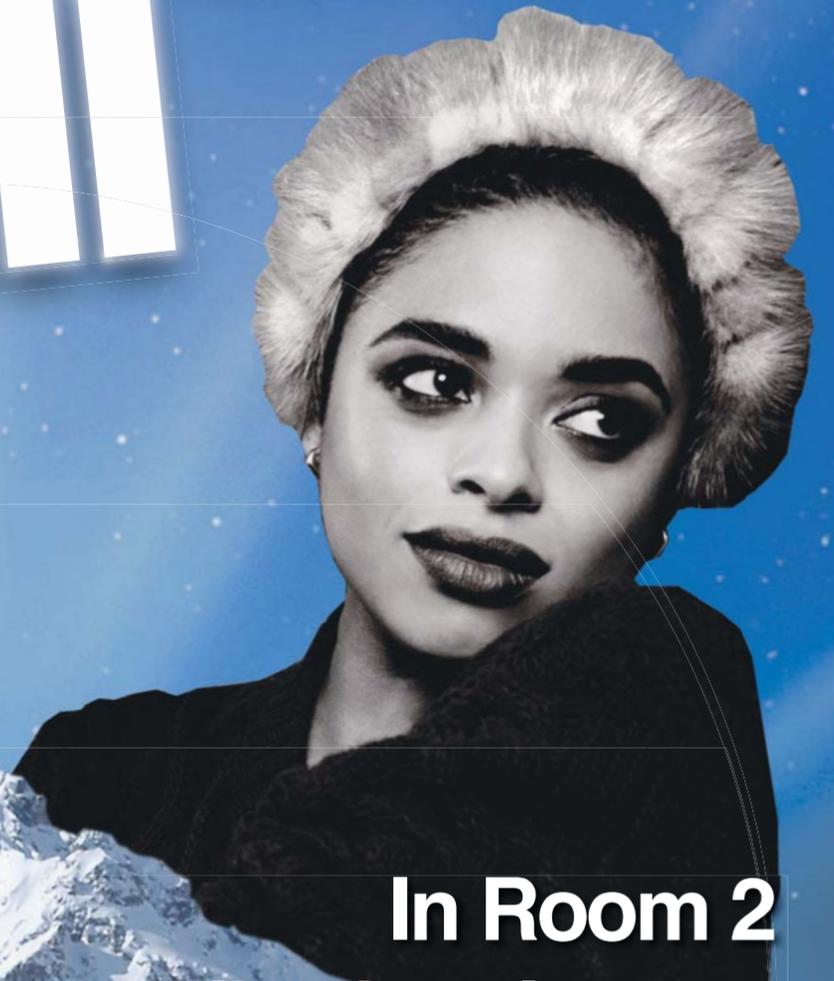
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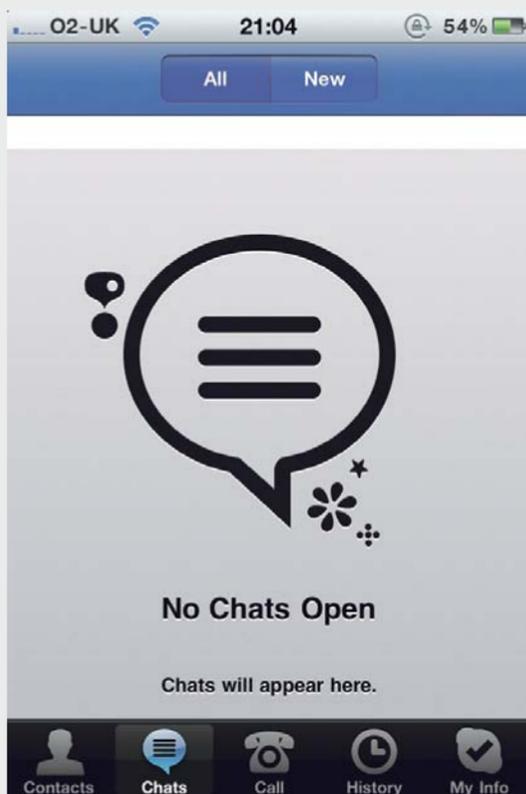
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TECHNOLOGY

Free App of the Week

iOS - Skype for iPhone



Keep in touch with your college friends whilst you're back home for free with Skype on the iPhone. Make VoIP calls over WiFi or 3G. Simple and effective.

Android - Skype for Android



VoIP, IM, even Skype out, the Skype app for Android says to the iPhone: everything you can do I can do better. But Neither of them can make with the video.

Christmas Gift Guide

Sam Gibbs talks gift ideas to suit almost any budget

£25 and Under



First up we've got the under £25 category, and while there's quite a lot you can get for under a quarter of a ton, there's not much better, and more useful, than a flash drive. Problem is flash drives are a dime a dozen these days, and while they come in all shapes and sizes most are downright dull.

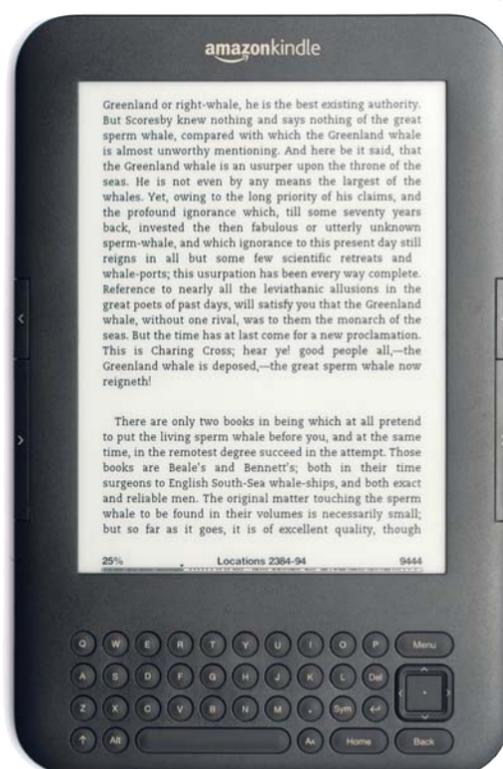
In steps the **Stormtrooper Unmasked Star Wars MIMOBOT**. Touted as a 'designer flash drive' the MIMOBOT series of official Star Wars flash drives brings a bit of nostalgia and fun to the otherwise mundane duty of storage.

Prices range from £13 up to about £40, for different storage sizes, while characters are available from all over the Star Wars universe.

£100-ish

So you've got about £100 to spend and you want something cool, something current, something ultimately useful?

In steps **Amazon's Kindle 3**. OK, it's not exactly £100, it's more like £109, but the 6" E Ink screen on the latest addition to the Kindle family is in a class of its own. Featuring even better contrast, battery life of about a month (!), and now with built-in WiFi meaning it's cheaper and you don't have to rely



on a 3G radio, perhaps now is the best time to get that special person the ultimate eBook reader?

They can buy and sync their books with the Amazon eBook store, plus with Kindle apps on the iPhone, Android or Blackberry.

It'll even do a bit of basic web browsing in a pinch.

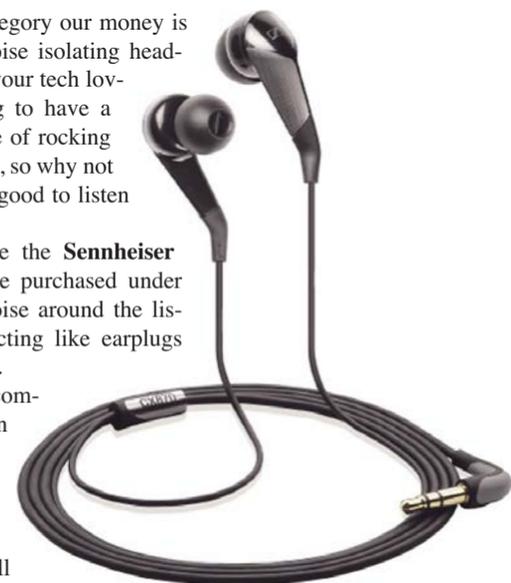
Left: The Amazon Kindle, who reads physical books these days anyway??

£50 and Under

For the under £50 category our money is on a decent set of noise isolating headphones. Chances are your tech loving recipient is going to have a pocket device capable of rocking their brains with tunes, so why not give them something good to listen to it with.

Sound isolators like the **Sennheiser CX870**, which can be purchased under £50, block out the noise around the listener passively, by acting like earplugs with speakers in them.

Great for noisy commutes, working in shared spaces or simply blocking out inane chatter. They don't half sound good either, and will work with almost anything.



Blow the boat out

OK, so the Kindle 3 is cool, but if you've got a budget the size of a months food bill, then there's only one must have gift this Christmas and that's the **Apple iPad**.

Available in several flavours, but starting out at £429 for the 16GB WiFi-only version, the iPad has redefined tablet computing, and truly carved a niche out for itself against traditional computing platforms like the humble laptop, netbook and even to some extent the desktop.

Although it's not a true computer in and of itself, you still have to sync it with a computer to be able to use it, the iPad does many things very well. Web browsing, email, video and games — you won't find much better-a-gift this holiday season. £429, sorted.



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BUSINESS

Business Editors: **Sina Atherian**
Afonso Campos

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Snippets

House prices down... again

A study by Halifax, the lender, has clearly shown that the average house price has seen a 0.1% decline in November. This adds to the overall trend in which the housing market finds itself. The Land Registry figures confirm this downward trend.

Experts believe that the continued decline arises from a lack of available mortgages and banks' reluctance in handing them out to first-time buyers or those with a lower initial deposit.

Bush era tax cuts extended

On Monday, the United States Congress and President Obama have reached an agreement that extends lower taxes for all earners, including the rich, for an additional two years. These lower taxes are a product of ex-President Bush's administration.

An aide to Mr Obama has said that the president was forced to do this in order to cut a deal with Republicans to extend unemployment pay, a source of much contention between the two parties. David Axelrod said that the Democrats are "not going to play Russian roulette with the lives of the American people, with all the millions of people that are going to lose their unemployment insurance right now without this bill going forward". That said, Mr Obama is currently having to lobby members of his own party.

New Financial Worlds Conference

The Imperial College Finance Society will be playing host to its first finance conference, which is not unlike ones previously organised by students at the London School of Economics or University College London.

The Imperial conference has a focus on investment banking activities, rather than private equity firms or hedge funds, separating it nicely from the LSE one. The Finance Society has taken the view that in reality, buy-side firms do not recruit as many graduates. As such, it says the conference is "geared towards educating students and providing them with a great platform to get a graduate job".

Conference organisers have been able to secure some outstanding speakers, including Michael Brennan of Morgan Stanley, Global Head of Crude Oil, Fuel Oil and Shipping Trading; David Long, Global Head of Equities at J.P. Morgan, David Simmonds, the Global Head of Research and Strategy at RBS.

Worthy of note is that no other conference has garnered the support of so many investment banking institutions.

The event, to be held at the exquisite Bloomberg Headquarters in February and is priced at a very reasonable £24. Tickets are limited.

Apply online at: icfsconference.com/apply

A focus on: Basics of Islamic Finance

Afonso Campos interviews himself to provide you with an introduction to the world of Sharia-compliant finance



Islamic Finance is now bigger than ever; and its growth seems to be accelerating

So, what is Islamic Finance, really? Give me the basics.

To put it relatively simply, Islamic Finance is an alternative way of going about financial dealings; these are conducted in such a way that they comply fully with the religious requirements of Islam. It is generally fully governed by and compliant with Sharia Law, the Islamic Law derived from the Holy Koran as well as the Sunnah, the habits and sayings of the Prophet Muhammed. The overarching statements and rules are implicit in these texts, but the intricacies of how they apply to real world situations tend to be decided based on interpretation by panels of senior financial professionals and learned scholars of Islam.

What is the main difference from conventional finance?

It is a wildly different model that stems mostly from a fundamental and theological difference in the view of economics. In Islamic Finance, given its religious groundings, the dominant idea is that God as a creator is responsible for all happenings, including economic situations. This view is not subscribed to by conventional banking and finance. From this stems the chief idea that in Islam, money is not viewed as a tangible asset, but simply as a measure and store

of value, and as such, should not itself exclusively generate more money. This restricts ways in which business can be done.

The most prominent difference is that interest, known as "riba", is not allowed. This means that banks cannot charge borrowers for interest on their loans and customers cannot receive interest on their deposits.

What else separates the two?

Islam does not allow an excess of uncertainty and hence, does not allow gambling either. As a result, it is forbidden to speculate wildly in the financial markets with overly leveraged instruments and complex derivatives. Big bets on volatile products are therefore not desirable. An ethical investment policy also applies. Islamic financial institutions may not invest in or have dealings with any business that violates the basic rules of the religion or could be construed as immoral. It is absolutely out of question to invest in companies related to, or directly involved in: pork products, alcohol, pornography, arms and defense, amongst others.

How then, are banks able to provide services to customers?

In order to fund their operations as a business, instead of charging interest,

banks accrue a fee that takes into account all of its running costs. This includes cost of human capital, technology and infrastructure; the cost is then shared by the banks' customers in the form of said fee. This means that an increase of the customer base is usually translated into a reduction of fees charged. Of note is that the opposite, is clearly also true.

In order to reward customers for their deposits, instead of offering interest-bearing accounts, the bank engages in investments and will share any profit (or loss) with the customers. This sharing agreement is absolutely crucial in Islam and contrasts vigorously with the way conventional banks tend to work, where self-interest is often evident.

Can companies raise bonds, or customers borrow money then?

Firms, sovereigns and governments can raise a different kind of finance. This is done in the form of Sukuks. These are akin to bonds, except they do not formally guarantee a return, even though they are often backed by governments. In a way they resemble the ownership aspect of equities, except that they follow a bond-like structured payout.

If a customer wanted to borrow money for a car, a new TV or even a house, they would engage in a form of credit similar to leasing called "Murabaha".

Read this article online at felixonline.co.uk

BUSINESS

In this instance, instead of customers buying the goods directly, the bank would purchase them on their behalf and sell it back to the customer who would then make regular payments according to an agreed schedule that would also include a fee.

How did Islamic Banks fare during the financial crisis?

On average, they did not fare as badly as their standard counterparts. This is partly because of the limited scope of products in which the banks can be involved. Instruments like Collateralised Debt Obligations (CDOs), which suffered abysmally during the crisis, were mostly absent from the balance sheets of institutions abiding to Islamic financial principles.

While they did not underperform as

“It is forbidden to speculate wildly in the financial markets with overly leveraged instruments”

severely, it must be noted that in economic booms, there is also less scope to take advantage of this trend. The response to economic stimulus is notably more tempered and tepid. The International Monetary Fund does suggest that this view is somewhat simplistic and that it does not reflect the fact that Islamic Finance institutions do not have a great ability to share risk given their

inability to engage in products that may help spread it around more easily.

What does the future hold for Islamic Finance?

While only 1% of the world's financial transactions are guided by Islamic principles, this is growing fast at a rate of 15-20% a year. Interestingly, not only Muslims are taking interest in this form of finance. Many non-Muslims, especially in Malaysia, are finding that this way of doing business fits in nicely with their morals and ethics. As a result, many global banks such as HSBC and Citi are offering Sharia-compliant accounts for anyone interested. It would not be surprising to see this growth rate increase significantly in the coming years as Islamic Finance finds ways to mimic more of the conventional offerings of banks.



Islamic Banking institutions are becoming ever more prominent in the West, serving the needs of Muslims and non-Muslims alike

Books for intellectual City type sellouts

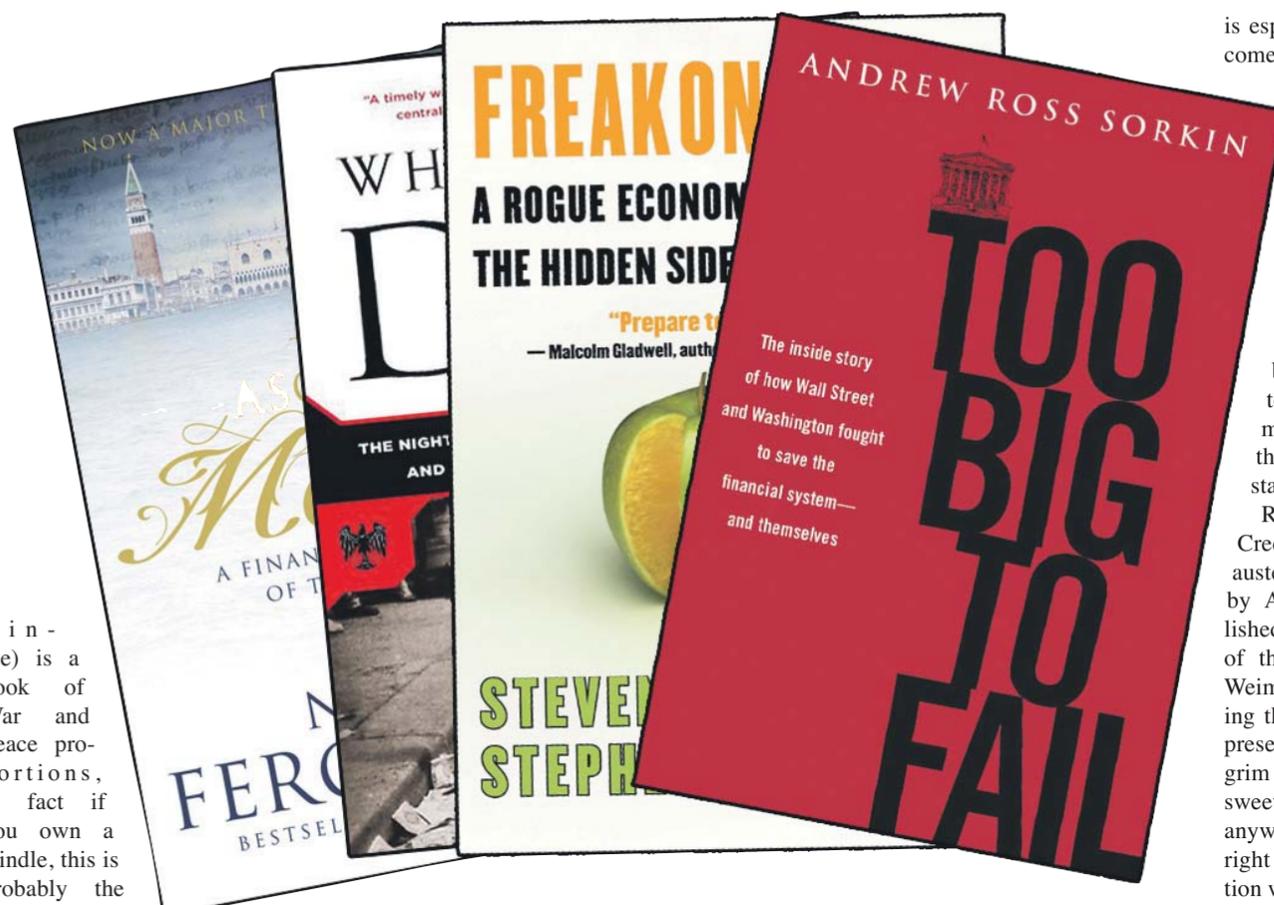
If you find yourself out of preparation for job interviews, free of coursework and suitably bored, **Matthew Allinson** thinks you should read some books

The only function of economic forecasting is to make astrology look respectable” said Ezra Solomon. For more funny lines from ivory tower economists, the fantastic ‘Freakonomics’ and ‘Superfreakonomics’ books by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner (both £5.30 from Amazon, £7.99 for kindle) show the power of economics in real world situations. With chapter titles such as “Why are Street Prostitutes like Department Store Santas,” you can be sure it’s very irreverent in tone. They’re written for a general, wide audience and are delightful introduction books to the field of economics in general.

Another brilliant book for beginners is ‘The Ascent of Money’ by Niall Ferguson (£5.69) that came out to accompany an equally brilliant television series of the same name. Ferguson is a professor of history at Harvard, and his book describes the history of money from the ancient Middle East, through to gold rushes, to the new world in the late medieval ages, the mighty renaissance power houses of Italy, and right up to the fascinating story of Long Term Capital Management and then the big bad Credit Crunch. Furthermore it also offers beginners-guide level explanations to bonds, shares and monetary theory, and does so well enough to be useful as a reference (I always forget what bond yields are) The TV series is easy to find online for either streaming or downloading, and makes for brilliant viewing.

‘Too Big to Fail’ (£8.49, £9.99 on

Kindle) is a book of War and Peace proportions, in fact if you own a Kindle, this is probably the time to use it. Charting the entire Credit Crunch beginning with the aftermath of the fire sale of Bear Stearns, it tells the entire saga of Lehman Brothers’ ungainly toppling over, Merrill Lynch’s sale to Bank of America, the near explosion of AIG and the international response from governments and regulators, focusing mainly on the



New York Fed and the Treasury. Written by the New York Times financial columnist Andrew Ross Sorkin, the foreword claims to have been written off the back of over 500 hours of interviews with over 200 people close to the events, and it certainly feels like it. Paced like any good thriller, this expansive novel of an historic account really keeps you turning the pages,

although frequently back to the front of the book where there is an 8 page list of characters. Personalities really shine through this story, although as it’s about investment bankers who managed to drive huge companies into the ground, the personalities are usually those of total dickheads. The biggest dick of all, Dick Fuld Jr, the CEO of Lehman at the time of the bankruptcy

is especially good to laugh at as it all comes crashing down. There is clearly some artistic license used in this book, especially in the setting of the scene, but the comprehensive lists of notes and sources makes sure that it doesn’t get too into the flight of fiction. If that doesn’t convince you, it even has some pictures, including a photocopy of the absolutely ridiculous cheque for \$9 billion written by Mitsubishi UFJ to Morgan Stanley. If they ever make Credit Crunch: The Movie, this book would be a good place to start for the script.

Recently re-issued in light of the Credit Crunch and following age of austerity ‘When Money Dies’ (£6.88) by Adam Ferguson originally published in 1975, is an historic account of the hyperinflation experienced in Weimar Germany. If you’ve been reading this article thinking for Christmas present ideas, don’t be put off by the grim subject, this book has a totally sweet cover that makes it a cool present anyway. Ferguson strikes the tone just right in describing the sheer destruction wrought on the population without over doing it and becoming hysterical, as well as providing criticisms of the politicians in charge at the time without being too ideological. In a time when we once again find countries with colossal sovereign debts and widespread angst and anger at government cuts, this book serves as an excellent reminder why we have to turn the printing presses off.

POLITICS

The world beyond College walls



Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast has been suspended from the Economic Community of West Africa, as African states join the UN and Western states to call on President Gbagbo to cede power, after Ivory Coast's disputed Presidential election. Opposition leader Ouattara has been declared the winner of the presidential election by the Election Commission but was overruled by the Constitutional Court, which annulled half a million votes in Mr Ouattara's stronghold in the north. The political impasse has heightened fears that Ivory Coast could descend into unrest and bloodshed, and comes after the Liberian President warned its former rebel fighters not to get involved in Ivory Coast's internal conflict. Ivory Coast supplies a major portion of the world's cocoa and is still recovering from a civil war which ended in 2002.



Palestine

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas says that the Middle East peace talks are in crisis following Israel's refusal to stop building settlements on occupied land. President Abbas' comments come hours after the United States formally suspended its demand for a settlement freeze in the occupied West Bank, admitting that its efforts have come to nothing. A settlement ban was one of the conditions set by the Palestinians for direct talks and Mr Abbas has suspended direct talks in September following the expiry of a settlement ban. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are now due in Washington for direct talks but it is not clear whether the Palestinians will attend.



Haiti

Protests erupted around the Haitian capital Tuesday night after an election council announced a runoff between a Ms Aligat, the former first lady, and Mr Celestin who is allied with Haiti's increasingly unpopular Government. Protesters around Port au Prince have threatened to set Haiti on fire and called President Preval a thief, after pop star Mr Martelly narrowly failed to garner enough votes to enter the presidential run-off. The UN has described the voting irregularities as more serious than previously thought and the opposition has demanded that the results be annulled and a new vote be held. Haiti is currently in the midst of a cholera epidemic and is struggling to recover from the disastrous earthquake in January last year.



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Printing to pay debt

Tomokazu Miyamoto

This year will be the toughest year for the eurozone ever. Since the financial crisis in 2008, the US and Europe have suffered from a serious recession. In fact, the PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain), especially Greece and Ireland, are now at the fiscal brink, and they have called for a bailout from the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Now we, the Europeans, should consider why they face debt woes and what the best solution to this problem is. Essentially, the European debt problem lies in the fatal defect of the eurozone, that is, only the European Central bank (ECB) can issue euros in that region. In other words, each country which joined the eurozone cannot print banknotes. Therefore, if a nation in that area accumulates large governmental debt by issuing governmental bonds, the country cannot discharge it by printing money. Such a separation of fiscal policy with financial policy is the fundamental problem which overshadows the eurozone.

Unlike the eurozone, the UK can print money and pay the debt whenever it wants to do. George Irvin, a columnist of Guardian.co.uk, says "Every schoolboy knows (or should know) that government cannot 'go broke' like a private business. As long as Britain has its own currency, it has the power to print money." Then some readers may worry about inflation after quantitative easing, but basically inflation means not only expansion of monetary base but also an increase in income level, that is, a recovery from recession.

The other major problem regarding the present euro system is that some countries in the eurozone cannot have the benefit of devalua-



Some borrowers can print their own money to pay their debts

tion. In general, a country increases its supply of money by printing banknotes, the value of them decreases, compared with that of other countries. Such a devaluation makes the country competitive in terms of export, but unfortunately the euros system doesn't permit this.

In the 1990's, Ireland's current account balance was in surplus, but since the country launched the euro currency in 1999, it has been in deficit. In particular, during the year of the US financial crisis, the figure worsened to -5.5% of GDP. The country lost the advantage of exchange rate in terms of export because it joined the euro zone.

The same holds true for other eurozone nations. Prof. Paul Krugman, the Nobel economics prize winner in 2008, says "If Spain still had its old currency, the peseta, it could remedy that problem quickly through devaluation — by, say, reducing the value of a peseta by 20 percent against other European currencies." If Spain re-adopted the peseta, it could expand its monetary base to the extent that it wants to, which would

lead to a recovery of export. Iceland, whose banks went bankrupt in 2008, has a little better economic situation than Ireland does.

Even though the change of GDP in Iceland is slightly worse than that of Ireland, the employment of the former is better. Unlike Ireland, Iceland decided to let foreign lenders to its runaway banks pay bad private debts, rather than putting its own taxpayers on the line to guarantee the debts.

As the IMF notes approvingly, "private sector bankruptcies have led to a marked decline in external debt." In addition, Iceland has also benefited from the fact that it still has its own currency; devaluation of Iceland krona, which has made the nation's exports more competitive, has been an important factor in limiting the depth of Iceland's slump.

Even though George Osborne, the chancellor of the exchequer, claims that Britain is close to bankruptcy, UK's debt problem is different from that of PIIGS, and UK citizens need not worry about the nation's deficit.

The US likely to remain in Iraq

Raz Jabary

This Tuesday, Imperial's Political Philosophy Society (PPS) hosted an event about the future of Iraq, with a special focus on what might happen after the planned U.S. troop withdrawal by the end of next year. Special guest speaker was Professor Charles Tripp, Professor of Politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), bestselling author and one of the leading Iraq-experts in the UK.

According to Professor Tripp, although next year might be marked by a military withdrawal of the U.S. from Iraq, the U.S. would very likely still continue to remain highly involved in Iraq's various other sectors. He spent time dealing with matters relating to each of the three respective population groups in Iraq — the Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds.

Attention was paid also to the main troubled areas within the country, including Mosul and Kirkuk in the north, and Najaf in the middle part of Iraq. Professor Tripp referred to the

troubled oil-rich city of Kirkuk as 'Iraq's Jerusalem'. The majority of the city is comprised of Kurds. The Kurds indeed regard it to be demographically, geographically and historically part of Kurdistan.

Professor Tripp discussed various decisive factors shaping up the future of the troubled nation, which includes oil, Kurdish federalism or even independence and Iranian

"Iran is the only country which has benefitted"

foreign influence amongst others. He emphasized that Iran is the only country which has benefited from the situation in neighbouring Iraq — with its former arch-enemy Saddam Hussain removed from power and a Shiite-led coalition now installed in the country's government.

Interestingly, or even rather worryingly,

Professor Tripp phrased the term 'civil war' when referring to the time of intense fighting between Iraq's Sunni and Shiite populations a few years ago.

Finally, on top of the academic views with which he reflected upon the main aspects of Iraq's probabilistic future, Professor Tripp briefly reflected back upon his meeting with former Prime Minister Tony Blair in November 2002, a few months before the start of the Iraq war.

During that meeting, Professor Tripp had emphasized to the Prime Minister a possibly unwelcoming outcome on the ground in Iraq. 'But he seemed to take no notice of what I or my colleagues had to say', Professor Tripp remarked.

During the Q&A session following the lecture, Professor Tripp interestingly remarked about the Chilcot inquiry, in which the former British Prime Minister once cancelled a book signing in London because he had been 'too afraid to get arrested by civilian law enforcement'.

Immigration cap will hit international students the hardest

Lingxi Huang

Speaking to the House of Commons on 23rd of November, the Home Secretary Theresa May announced plans to cut the number of non-EU immigrants by a fifth from next year. Student visas are amongst one of the proposed targets for the cut. In light of the impending visa restrictions, the future of international students in UK seems increasingly uncertain.

It is easy to see how international students are by far the easiest target. Given the high unemployment rate, the government promised to reduce the net inflow of migrants to "tens of thousands" by year 2015 to protect British jobs. This means that the current immigration figure has to be halved in the span of less than 5 years. Since the government cannot control the movements of EU citizens or British expatriates, the cut will mainly involve narrowing the channel for immigrants from outside the EU. Most of such immigrants belong to three major categories: highly skilled labour, students and family seeking to join their relatives in the UK. Tough measures preventing family reunions may attract the ire of settled immigrants and are against the Human Rights Act. Highly skilled workers provide valuable expertise to businesses, whose powerful lobby groups ensure that "intra-company transfers" are not

restricted. This leaves only the students, to whom more than 50,000 entry permits were issued in the first quarter of 2010, open to drastic cuts.

International students have little political voice to speak of. Overseas students have virtually no influence in a country where public policies are influenced heavily by poll results and opinions of British public. While the recent proposed tuition fees hike sparked street protests, international students have quietly resigned themselves to paying fees more than double of that amount. When the immigration cap on students comes into force, these students are unlikely to be found waving placards angrily at politicians either. This makes cutting student visas a tempting option for a government hard pressed to show the public that it is in control of immigration.

At a time when government funding for higher education institutions is being squeezed, universities across the board may increasingly look to international students for a steady income stream. Furthermore, the majority of postgraduate students in fields such as computer science and biotechnology consists of international students. As students provide an important talent pool for research and innovation, diminishing their numbers will affect the long term competitiveness of the UK's knowledge

economy.

If the prospects of finding suitable jobs are poor, earning an UK degree may become a lot less attractive for the prospective students. Overseas students are shrewd consumers who vote both with their cash and feet. As the demand for higher education ballooned due to rising household income in emerging economies, education has evolved into a fiercely competitive global industry. In countries like Australia, higher education spending by international students contributes to a significant proportion of their GDP.

While the UK attracts the second largest number of overseas students now, it may soon lose its position if visa permits are drastically reduced. The globe-trotting youngsters are spoilt for choice when it comes to choosing an overseas education. If they feel unwelcome in Britain, they may simply move off to a more student-friendly place like Canada or Australia.

The political motivations for the immigration cap can hardly justify the long term ramifications of restricting the inflow of students. While the coalition government tries its best to shore up its promise to the electorate, it might be well worthwhile to remember that these students will be harder to coax back once their sights are set elsewhere.



Theresa May has so far stood by the immigration cap

Weakness plagues British politics, but not Top Gear

Charles Betts

Britain's political leaders are having a rough December. As three wise men steadily travel from the East to a barn in Bethlehem with gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense, it seems that we at home have been left to cope with three vain stooges that can only offer broken pledges, little international presence, and noticeable inexperience.

First, there's David Cameron. He comes across as the sort of snotty fun-killing school prefect that commands his peers to stop setting fire to some first year's testicles in the spirit of hearty Etonian initiation ceremonies, only to see the gang turn on him. And it seems Barack Obama agrees. Last week, leaked documents disclosed that the US President declared "What a lightweight!" following his first meeting with the PM and

was distinctly unimpressed. Cameron's transparent attempts at brown-nosing were also frowned upon by Obama.

Cameron's international status was further undermined when England failed to secure the FIFA 2018 World Cup. Was the PM out of his depth when dealing with the crooked, two-timing shifty executives of football's governing body? Three of FIFA's executives are suspected of taking bribes in an alleged scandal involving around \$100m of secret payments. A fourth is said to be involved in the corrupt sale of World Cup tickets. Did Cameron not understand that either you stay away from these unpleasant warts, and don't go on a Sepp Blatter schmoozing trip to Switzerland, or you play by their rules? He was amateurish; his faux charisma no match for Machiavelli's star pupil Blatter.

Regarding the FIFA World Cup cam-

paign, don't forget that Nick Clegg described the bid as "unbeatable" back in August. A prediction that proved dangerously premature. He also pledged to not raise tuition fees before the election and has conceded that he had "not been able to deliver the policy that we held in opposition." To be fair, at least he has managed to achieve something that Labour rule failed to do over a decade; politicise the youth. Even if it is to aim fire extinguishers at him from Millbank Tower. Yet his inexperience is shining through. There is a reason big business doesn't back the Lib Dems. Remember when everyone "agreed with Nick"? Nowadays, it is Nick that agrees with David.

But let us not forget Ed Miliband. When Gordon Brown left the political scene in May, having been a lame duck for three years, Labour had the chance to re-kindle the spirit of the early Blair era.

"Ed is as ineffective as a Facebook status update"

The leadership contest was largely between two brothers: David and Ed. David read PPE at Corpus Christi, Oxford; so did Ed. David got a First; Ed got a 2:1. David worked for Tony Blair, Ed for Gordon Brown. David became Foreign Secretary; little Ed had to be content with Climate Change. It seemed the natural choice to go for the brighter, more experienced candidate. But Ed won.

In the words of Russell Howard, Labour had just elected themselves a "melted Mr Bean." He has been ridiculed for coining the slogan "Beyond New Labour" and some claim Ed is not

moving fast enough to define himself and the party's direction. He has yet to make key appointments, including director of communications. No single figure appears to be dominating his media strategy, leading some to state that he is missing chances to make a mark with the public. Ed is as ineffective as Facebook status updates. Is David's experience missed?

There may be a solution to this plague of callousness and ineptitude that is consuming British politics. Three other men have headed to Bethlehem this winter to film a TV Christmas special. Wise is not a word that necessarily hits the mark, but they are certainly more entertaining, funny, and popular than Cameron, Clegg, or Miliband. Wouldn't it be nice to see Clarkson, Hammond, and May go head-to-head in Prime Minister's Questions?



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Life Sciences Restructre - What we have been doing..

On Wednesday this week we saw a huge wave of anger from students and staff for the restructure of the Department of Life Sciences and the redundancies that go with it. Two sections are being deleted, leading to 14 (15%) of the academic staff being made redundant, plus a few more early retirements. This will lead to a 25% loss in teaching time across Biology and Biochemistry Degrees as well as Masters Courses. PhD students are also unsure about their future here.

The Union arranged a meeting where the Head of Department and Head of Faculty could explain the restructure to students and staff, many of whom believe they

weren't consulted properly. Over 400 people attended and I was moved by the outpouring of support for the academics being forced to leave, who are for most students, the best teachers in the department. We followed the meeting by laying plants outside the Faculty Building; it was a pleasure to see everyone from my old lecturers to freshers there to put down a plant or a bunch of flowers.

Now this protest against the restructure will turn more serious. Do not worry if you think that this is the end. The staff's union is questioning the very nature of the flawed consultation and the reasons behind the restructure. Students are

spreading the word amongst the press and to everyone else at Imperial. We are taking this to the highest levels of College. Our message is threefold; the reasons behind this restructure are flawed and have been proved false, there will be a huge loss to teaching and breadth in Biology and Biochemistry, and the way this has been handled, as you will see in the rest of this edition of felix, is inhuman. Students and staff stand together.

On Wednesday 15 at 15:00 there will be a meeting of College Senate, the highest educational body at the University. We will be taking a paper to them asking for action. Join us outside.



Alex Kendall
President

College want your Feedback

SOLE Survey Open!

What is SOLE?

The Student Online Evaluation (SOLE) survey is a survey designed by Imperial to gather information from undergraduate students on their lecture modules in the term that has passed. It provides vital information for students, staff and the Union; this information allows us to acknowledge courses which are well run, and address issues which need to be taken care of. SOLE is run once every term.

What's in it for me? (Students)

Mould your course - this is one of the few chances you will get to give constructive, anonymous feedback on your lecturers. Feedback - your Department will be providing you with the result outcomes, so you can see how your voice has made a difference!

Departmental Society - the Departments with the three highest participation rates receive cash prizes for their Departmental Society. Most Departments also offer individual incentive prizes for filling out

SOLE; speak to your student reps to find out what these are.

What's in it for them? (Staff)

- Departmental Feedback
your Departments are keen to hear what you have to say. SOLE results have considerably affected undergraduate course structures in the past.
- Staff Feedback
every lecturer receives the comments given on them, and is respond to these.
- Promotion
when lecturers are considered for promotion, their SOLE results play a key role.

Sounds great! But where can I fill out SOLE...

SOLE is running NOW and will close at midnight on the 19th December. It only takes a couple of minutes to fill out and can be found at www.imperial.ac.uk/news/sole.

Vagina Monologues Auditions

Part of SHAG Week part 2.

The Vagina Monologues by Eve Ensler was written from hundreds of interviews with real women about their lives: their experiences, their relationships and their sexuality. It has become a modern classic and the cornerstone of a global movement to end domestic violence and sexual abuse. The shows will be part of next year's SHAG Week and all ticket profits will go to support a number of charities with these aims. We're looking for any and all women at Imperial to audition and participate - you don't need to have any acting experience and there are lots of parts available. We are also looking for students of both genders to get involved behind the scenes - email dpwelfare@imperial.ac.uk if you're interested.

Auditions are in Seminar Room 1 of the Union building on:

Saturday 11 December 14.00-17.00
Wednesday 15 December 14.00-17.00, 19.00-22.00
Thursday 16 December 19.00-22.00



Charlotte Ivison
Deputy President (Welfare)



Comment Editor: Anna Perman

comment.felix@imperial.ac.uk

COMMENT

FELIX

Both students and staff deserve better than this

There are so many things that are objectionable about the redundancies in the Life Sciences department that one hardly knows where to begin. The staff being made redundant have had their teaching achievements ignored and their research talked down. Undergraduates have been repeatedly assured that their courses will not be impacted despite the overwhelming evidence that the quality of teaching will decrease and the courses that they want to do will no longer be available. Masters students have paid for a service that they will not receive to the standard that they expected when they forked over their cash and finally PhD students have been thrown into chaos with little or no information given to them. Even the academics who have survived feel insecure; if this is how the department treats the aforementioned groups, why should any of the survivors be treated differently in future?

This aggressive focus on the Plant and Microbial Science (PMS) unit can be called unfair for any of a number of reasons. Most prominent among these would have to be the highly disruptive move from the Wye campus which has taken place over the past six years. But include an opaque use of statistics and a questionable vision of the future relevance of research areas and suddenly dissolving the PMS and Cell Biology and Functional Genomics units becomes indefensible.

But rather than attempting to inadequately summarise the debate in this column, we would like to recognise something intensely positive blooming in this deeply saddening time. It is often supposed that there is some sort of barrier between the students and the staff, and that neither is appreciated by the other. But this week, the divide has been crossed. Students new and old have come out to express their appreciation for those members of staff who dedicated their time to ensuring that they got a top-quality education, and whose careers are now at risk.

Maggie Dallman, the Head of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, unwittingly gave us an insight into the crux of the matter during the public meeting held this week. She suggested that if Imperial took money away from accommodation and gym funding to invest in teaching, then students would again complain. But this is not the case. There is a near pathological inability to recognise that students do care about their teaching and some staff do care about their students – although perversely, these are the first to go.

Pruning science

Cutting teaching staff in Life Sciences is completely incompatible with aims to improve teaching standards



Mevani Jagodage

Royal College of
Science Union
Welfare Officer

The Biology and Biochemistry Departments are currently undergoing a Restructure and in the next few months a 'Departmental Teaching Review' will follow. This Restructure involves the removal of the 'Plants and Microbial Science' and 'Cell Biology and Genomics' sections. These areas were chosen for restructure due to their 'under-performing' in research and the fact that they are 'not fitting in the new department structure'. Replacing these two sections will be one 'Integrative Systems Biology' section. Teaching has not been taken into account, purely the involvement in research! 17 members of staff across the Departments will be made redundant. They include the Heads of each Department alongside Senior Academic Tutors and Admissions Tutors. With these significant members of staff leaving the Department, there will surely be a great loss to the quality of teaching available.

On meeting with Professor Ian Owens on Monday, he continually reassured us that these changes will not affect the courses available for final year students but we failed to see how they would compensate for the loss of such good lecturers and course convenors. When asked how it will affect PhD students, they said only 10% of 200 students would be affected and thus reallocated to a new supervisor. Overall, there will be a huge disruption placed on the Department. Not only will Imperial's reputation be lowered but also student satisfaction in these Departments will take an even bigger hit.

Of course there is always room for improvement in any Department but what justification is there for getting rid of



Che was not amused by cuts to plant sciences. And you should never, ever piss off a monkey...

the best lecturers the Department has to offer?

Their reasoning for this Restructure is said to be; firstly, to resolve the financial problem that Biology and Biochemistry have been experiencing; and secondly, to modernise the degrees by implementing more research-based teaching. They hope the restructure will bring improvements such as more course choices; smaller group teaching sessions; more sessions in real research labs; integrated quantitative teaching; and modernising of the material.

With 15% of the teaching staff made redundant, how can the Departments possibly achieve these improvements and maintain teaching excellence? Many of those being made redundant are the best lecturers, who are passionate about teaching and genuinely care for students. At such a prestigious university, teaching should be placed first and not second to research. Research is very important at this establishment but not at the cost of quality teaching.

If financial stability were such an issue, would it not be more feasible to keep the members of staff and open up new Masters courses? Currently, the Masters courses in Biochemistry are very limited. For example, a Masters in Biotechnology, a branch of Biochemistry,

Of course there is always room for improvement but what justification is there for getting rid of the best lecturers the Department has to offer?

is not offered and many students would take up a place if offered. Increasing the range of Masters courses will bring in a lot of money, but instead the Review Panel feel the only solution is to make significant lecturers redundant.

It is very clear that there will be merging between Biochemistry and Biology courses to compensate for the loss of course convenors. Currently, the convenors run courses according to the research they produce, research that the Review Panel deemed 'unfit'. Under the Restructure, newly appointed convenors will be tailored according to the course requirements. The experts in the areas have been asked to leave and those with lesser expertise will take over.

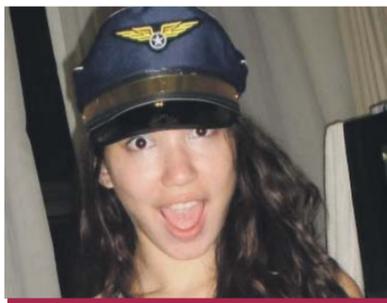
Increased tuition fees and lowered teaching quality- is this what Imperial students should now look forward to and come to accept?

Have your say on
this article at
felixonline.co.uk

COMMENT

The opinions expressed on the Comment pages represent the views of the author only.

No business like snow business



Lisa Ashari

“Being outside in the snow was utterly magical. I was officially in a Rom-Com”

After a month at imperial, my friends had found out that I hadn't ever touched snow. Naturally I was mildly teased as they took amusement from my winter noobness. As soon as the prospect of snow arrived in the form of a little icon on the BBC online weather forecast, I was over the moon. Of course, I was expecting to wake up to a snow day the next day so when I went to lectures that day I was rather excited. As soon as people said “it won't settle”, I just nodded and toned down the outward enthusiasm. One Google search later I realised that meant it'll be in the sky but not on the ground. Sad face.

Skip to next Tuesday at 7:30AM I receive a text saying, “SNOW!” My obvious response to this is to immediately rip my covers off and, in one swift movement, tear open the curtains while launching myself toward the window with enough force to have my face collide with the glass. Potential facial bruises aside, seeing the little white things falling from the sky was astonishing.

I do not remember how long I stood

there but once I removed myself from the fairytale, I frantically sent out a text along the lines of “as soon as you are awake enough to play in the snow with me, text me!!!!” after that I leaped over to my wardrobe to get changed. I soon realised I wasn't sure what to wear, but then a flash memory of my mother's email reminding me to layer up prompted me to wear all of my uni qlo gear at the same time, and then some. It took me about 20 minutes to put on 5 layers made up of 21 items of clothing. I then stuffed my pockets with any money I could find, just in case being in the snow brings on sudden expenses. Not a minute later, I received a reply from a friend from my old school (also very obviously a snow virgin) informing me that he and our other friend from before were in Princes Gardens freaking their shit over the snow. Eager to join them, I hurled myself down the stairs with enough force to stop a bus, and quickly exited Beit.

Being outside in the snow was utterly magical. In my head there are two kinds of snow: snow from romantic comedies and snow from action movies. I was of-

ficially in a rom-com. After the initial shock of having cold small things touch my cheeks, I was on my very merry way to Prince's Gardens. While walking I wasn't aware that I had an unnaturally large smile attached to my face until people started staring. Even after I realised I looked like I had just snorted some new class A drug, I was too giddy to care and so carried on scaring the south ken residents in a joker like fashion.

After meeting my friends, we just stood in the snow; open mouthed trying to catch it on our tongues. After that failed, we settled for copious amounts of prancing, leaping and other forms general joyousness. This is when I realised crunchy snow is like crunchy leaves on steroids, and this is coming from someone who will go WELL out of her way to step on a crunchy leaf. Naturally, this made me unbelievably happy as every step in the patch of snow gave a very satisfying crunch. Although the snow that day was minor, it was more than good enough for me and I proceeded with abnormally high spirits, a spring in my step and the same freakish smile plastered across my face.

The nativity: from a lady's point of view

Male chauvinists have assured me that it is my job to care about domestics. But to show that I am not merely using this as an excuse to slack off work and am taking my responsibilities as a female seriously, I want to tell you about my role model, Baboushka (aka Babs in my book). One could think of her as a Russian version of St Nicholas. For those to whom St Nicholas is a vague figure of festive season relevance with a day in his name, I ought to add some explanations; it would make a useful piece of trivia wouldn't it? However I want to get off the beaten Christmas track and not bother looking it up for your benefit.

A long long time ago in a galaxy far far away (picture Scotland), there lived a woman named Babs (okay so picture boobs). The three kings stopped by her place on their voyage to find the little babs, Jesus (maybe don't picture boobs this time).

They asked her to accompany them on their quest following a star, a request comparable to an offer to be in the studio audience for the X-Factor final, or some such joyous occasion.

And here's where it gets good; dear old Babs was too busy with the household chores (she just so happened to be cleaning the floor as the kings arrived). She knows her place as a woman, no? That's when things took a nasty turn though.

She later set out to follow the three kings with some gifts, regretting not joining them earlier. She asked around but could not find them, nor the Baby Jesus. Legend has it that she is still looking and hence goes about leaving trinkets for good children, hoping they will help her search. Good luck with that.

Truth is there are variations on the theme of old Baboushka, although “variation” seems a bit of an understatement! In one version, for example, Baboushka does join the three kings and gives her gifts to the Baby Jesus. Pretty contradictory.

There is clearly no moral here. My original version seems to suggest that ardently doing the housework does not pay which we all know is not true; it is the price of one husband.

Alexandra Nowbar

Our leaders are idiots... no shit



Angry Geek

“China secretly slaps it's knees whenever Kim Jong II makes a weird speech”

The praise for Julian Assange certainly is interesting to me. Not that I don't admire the man; it's very impressive what he's done,

and many of the papers released are genuinely hilarious to read. Mainly because they paint a picture that confirms the best and most accurate conspiracy of all - that the world is not run by malicious plotters or fascists or corporations, but that it is run by people. Stupid, fallible, normal people who just happen to be in a seat of power rather than the front of a taxi.

The leak was admirable because it reminded me that, yes, the world is actually normal. People think the Royal Family are crazy. China secretly slaps its knees and laughs whenever Kim Jong II makes a weird speech to the world.

I guess I find the praise strange because Julian Assange isn't really a freedom fighter this time around. He's just a petty and bitter man.

The war leaks seemed justified - I watched the gunship footage with horror, and it felt good to know that this sort of thing was able to be made public. But releasing a memo that suggests the US thought Brown was a bit ugly? It's hardly breaking news. It doesn't help anyone either. What Wikileaks has done is tanta-

mount to reading STD test results out at a brothel. The same people in the world are getting fucked, you're just making everyone feel slightly more uncomfortable about it.

And of course, this pettiness and dedication to the word “secret” has drawn out every government conspiracy maniac this side of the JFK assassination. There are people out there, people who were created through roughly the same biological process as you, me and Gilead Amit, who believe that America staged Pearl Harbour so they would have a reason to invade Asia. These people look at leaked documents about the size of Ronald Reagan's left testicle, and they say “If they were hiding that, who knows what else they could be hiding.”

It doesn't help that Assange looks like the offspring of Doc Brown from Back to the Future and John Inman from Are You Being Served. He gives off an image of craziness, a slight zany fire in his eyes that might make him appear to be leaderly and messianic, but also gives you that strange feeling that, at any second, he might start trying to sell you organic coffee.

Backed up with real, factual, existing documents, it's a shitstorm for every flavour of crazy out there. I can't help but admire him despite all this, though,

because what he's done I didn't think was possible in the world today. Angry people who hate “The West” like to think that the secret service can simply disappear people, erase companies and households off the map, make it look like an accident. But a man who looks like he'd surrender to a car backfiring, with all the special ops training of a European computer nerd, has managed to evade capture by just about everyone.

So here's the value of what Assange did; not the memos, which are tedious and predictable; not the diplomatic tizzy everyone got into; simply, that he showed just how incompetent the world really is.

No-one is out to get you. No-one is out to control you. They'd all like to, but they're just too thick. So sit back and have a relaxing Christmas, knowing full well that Big Brother is every bit as childish and silly as the name implies.

Merry Christmas. Here's to the Brave New World.

Have you got any secret government documents to reveal to the world?

Send them to anangrygeek@gmail.com so I can achieve worldwide fame... and then get arrested on sex charges.

Comment Editor: Anna Perman

comment.felix@imperial.ac.uk

COMMENT

If tube lines had a Christmas party...

You know that friend of yours who's always busy on weekends when you ask her to come out? She recently left a relationship that was just going round and round. Welcome to the Circle Line.

It takes this guy ages to get anywhere, sometimes going nowhere at all and just standing idly at the queue in the Post Office while everyone behind him just gets annoyed. To be honest he just wants to die with dignity but his fucking doctors won't give up on him. It's not your time just yet, District Line.

But this guy's the real alpha male: fast and strong, and women literally throw themselves at him. Those who do get to bed this stud will be disappointed, though: he's always coming in a couple of minutes. It's not all sunshine and roses for the Piccadilly Line. The Central Line and the previous customer are always trying to one-up each other, which sometimes results in a bit of a stare-off when they cross paths at Holborn.

This all leaves the Hammersmith and City line rather disgruntled. How would you feel if you were rendered obsolete by a cripple and a geriatric?

Nonetheless, whizzing past one another and spending all night at the depots together they are all pretty close, and they often arrange get-togethers, often BYOB (Bring Your Own Brakes) parties. This time they chose to chill at Hammersmith where they all meet, apart from the Central Line that is. He never could make Fridays anyway, on account of work the following day. So, many laughs were had as the WD-40 flowed and sparks flew, but something wasn't right. District was feeling unusually down today and left early, soon after P Dilly who couldn't stay up all night like the others, leaving the girls by themselves. That was soon interrupted by a knock on the door: the boyfriend. H&C, who lives with Circle, knew where this was heading and promptly told him to get derailed but Circle told her to shut up and invited him in. H&C was having none of it and disappeared into her room to drown her sorrows and the sound of make-up sex.

The following morning...

"There are severe delays on the Piccadilly Line due to the District Line falling under a train earlier and minor delays to the Hammersmith and City Line owing to about three bottles of tequila the night before. The District Line has finally been put out of its misery and been replaced by a series of rail replacement buses. There is no Central Line service today due to excessive gloating. There is a good service running on all other London Underground lines."

Veli Akiner

Christmas is nearly upon us, and Atheists and Christians alike can't wait to celebrate. The question is...



IS CHRISTMAS JUST FOR CHRISTIANS?



Chris Richardson

All too often I am confronted by pretentious atheists who are equally as intolerable as their religious fundamentalist counterparts: with The God Delusion as their Bible in hand these obnoxious babbling idiots often think they're superior and fail to acknowledge their own hypocrisy.

Said types of people are usually the first to complain at any other so-called festive holiday as a marketing scam employed by those evil corporations to force you into consumption of cards and other tacky crap, but make an exception for December 25th. Sure, the unity of the family and exchange of gifts is all fine and dandy, but the same crude Valentine's Day logic can also apply here – shouldn't such acts be spontaneous and not confined to a single day on the calendar? Or are you otherwise too unimaginative to conjure up something for yourself?

Yes, oh-so enlightened atheists, we're aware that December 25th is a date heinously stolen by those vandals to eliminate traces of a Roman solar holiday. While the date may be of pagan origin and thus not Christian, I'd like to remind you that you're in fact not a pagan either: by participating in this date hijacking you're simply stooping to the level of the thieves. Simply having an awareness of the pagan roots isn't a reason to celebrate, unless of course you have a soft spot for Roman sun gods.

Good old Dicky Dawkins, naturally, has a lot to say on the subject, incessantly rambling that Atheism simply takes it "one god further", and that in a way all Christians are atheists because they reject notions of Zeus, Thor and so on.

Equally we have to ask why atheists select only Christian holidays for their repertoire: are festivities from other religions not also worthy periods of sharing the love within your family? Or perhaps it's because of our 'culture', whatever that means. It's thanks to dim-witted disposable answers like 'culture' that things ranging from the abuse of children to evidence-based drugs policies get too easily overlooked.

Tied in neatly with 'culture' is this idea of tradition: we should celebrate Christmas because that is how it's always been in this glorious country. I don't think that I really have to point out (or perhaps I do) that this is in direct violation of the free-thinking fundamentals of secularism. If we stuck with this attitude of conservatism in other walks of life we'd be in an incredibly dreary society: such old traditions ought to be tossed away if we're really concerned about a forward-moving zeitgeist. Go ahead and abandon it, stop giving them further reason to incorrectly brand us a Christian nation.

"Shouldn't kind acts be spontaneous and not confined to a single day?"



Maciej Matuszewski

Christmas is traditionally a time of celebration but it has recently become quite a controversial holiday. I often hear people complaining about us losing touch with its traditional values and extolling us to "keep Christ in Christmas".

I don't see much sense in this attitude. While this is a Christian holiday there is no reason why atheists or people from other religions can't get something out of it too. While it almost certainly has greater significance and meaning for believers I don't particularly think that you need religion to take away this holiday's message of joy and goodwill. This is especially evident in how good Christmas is at bringing people together. Gathering all your relatives around a single table can improve family cohesion, whether you believe in the story of Jesus' birth or not.

It seems strange that so many Christians object to others celebrating this holiday when it is widely suspected that Christmas itself borrowed much from ancient pagan celebrations. Early Christians managed to take traditions that originated with beliefs that were completely alien to theirs and still turn them into something meaningful. Non-Christians can do the same today.

I always get very annoyed when people complain about things like putting up decorations too early, and the commercialisation of Christmas. I might not agree with these things but, since they don't interfere in the way I chose to celebrate I don't see why I should make a fuss. I think that the most important principle of our society is that people should be free to do whatever they want as long as they don't hurt others.

Those who do speak out are also very often hypocritical. I doubt that all those who are so vocal about the importance of religion in Christmas spend the whole of the 25th December in prayer and contemplation instead of partying with friends. They've accepted some secular aspects of the holiday so I find it strange that they should dislike those who accept a few more.

Such attitudes are doing far more harm than good. A few dissenters won't stop others celebrating this holiday as they best see fit. Instead, these irrational arguments add unnecessary tension to this festive period and take away from its peaceful message.

This was taken to extremes last year when a number of shops in Leeds were threatened and vandalised after they started selling Christmas cards in August.

Everybody would be happier if we just let each other be.

"A few dissenters won't stop others celebrating this holiday as they see fit"

The opinions expressed on the Comment pages represent the views of the author only.

COMMENT

Minced pies in June? If only!



Rhys Davies

“Why don’t we celebrate Christmas the whole year?”

What’s the point in Christmas? Before you start, I should make it clear I don’t have a personal grudge – or Grinch – against the festive season. Far from it – this whole month fills me with a child-like joy that eagerly effervesces with each opened advent calendar door. It would take strong persuasion to convince me not to live off mince pies and mulled wine for the rest of my life.

But, much as I love Christmas, I can’t see a purpose for it. Oh, of course, the Christians (of which I am one) have their reasons, and the pagans before them. But in this secular age, why do we celebrate Christmas?

Given the amount of time, effort and money most people put into this season, it is strange that the whole thing should feel so...empty. After an overenthusiastic haircut for King Charles I, Oliver

Cromwell sought to ban Christmas. He wanted religion without the party. These days, people seem to want the party without religion. I’m not saying that to have a meaningful Christmas, you have to trudge to church for hours, I just find it hard to understand why people want to celebrate...nothing.

However, even if Christmas in this modern age is pointless, we should still strive to preserve it and make it special. In a perfect universe, everything would have its place and nothing would exist without reason. But this is not our reality – we still have Piers Morgan, after all. I prefer it when things have a reason, but if they don’t, that doesn’t mean they can’t be good.

People often talk about the “Christmas spirit,” some kind of benevolent magic in the air which facilitates serendipity at a far higher frequency than normal. I guess it’s inevitable; with so much thought about other people’s presents,

parties, and placemats, some of that focus is bound to spill over into considering their wellbeing as well.

People seem to be more generous at this time of the year and whatever the reason, this is something that should be celebrated.

However, I do have one issue with this. People say they enjoy Christmas because it allows them to spend time with their families (Likewise, they also hate it for the same reason). What’s stopping them the rest of the year? If it only takes bright lights and tinsel to engender a sense of magnanimity in us, why don’t we celebrate Christmas the whole year round?

It would give me the excuse I need to drink mulled wine in March.

Merry Christmas to all of you...or winter Solstice, or whatever name you’re giving to your celebrations. Regardless, have a most festive season and a happy new year!

Dear Sirs,

I must address some of the points raised by Mr Davies [in last week’s article entitled “Flee! Flee the St John Ambulance Service!”] I stress that these are my personal views.

Mr Davies’ implicit suggestion that [St John Ambulance’s volunteers] are eager to defibrillate someone at the first opportunity to “try [the equipment] out” is tantamount to comparing the organisation’s members to mad scientists wanting to test equipment on wounded guinea pigs- a suggestion that leaves a very bitter taste in the mouth and is needless to say untrue.

Moreover, the suggestion that avoiding St John Ambulance avoids “the grim spectre of death” could well be interpreted as libellous. If Mr Davies has any actual examples of clinical malpractice I suggest he refers them through the appropriate channels rather than making unsubstantiated claims in the press. His assertion that St John Ambulance’s presence is a deterrent to injury on the basis of incompetence is entirely refutable and indeed offensive.

St John Ambulance is not, and never has been, a substitute for a local GP, A+E, nor the London Ambulance Service – they exist as an emergency first aid service to save lives and reduce injury, something it is extremely effective at doing. I would perhaps direct Mr Davies to look at some recent studies outlining the benefit of immediate first aid treatment in a scenario such as Cardiac Arrest, the definitive medical emergency, and perhaps he would see that people do come out of the Ambulances (at the hospital, for his reference) and subsequently from the hospital; a life saved that would otherwise have been lost.

I could go on with much more of the work SJA does in the community and beyond, but for fear of barracking the point I will not print them here. I do have to thank Mr Davies for getting the syntax of the organisation’s name correct, which is a common fault in the press – perhaps if he had put as much research into the work of St John Ambulance as he has on the correct spelling of the name then his comment piece would have been much less painful to read.

Faithfully yours,
Jaimie Henry
Chair, Imperial LINKS

Life Sciences cuts: Letters

Dear Rector,

We, the students of Imperial College London, are alarmed and strongly against the Life Science Restructure. We feel that the planned restructure will cause significant disruption to student life within Life Sciences. If it goes ahead, Imperial will damage its reputation for excellence in teaching and research. This move, and the manner in which it has been handled are not in the students’ best interest.

As students, we feel we have the right to define our university. The top-down approach of the restructure has ignored the will of the student body. The restructure limits Imperial’s capacity to produce world-class scientists in a number of key disciplines including Plant Science and Applied Cell Biology. It suggests that students do not value these disciplines, when in fact they consistently attract students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Globally, scientists who are trained in subjects like Food Security and Biofuels are highly valued. Research in these areas has been severely affected, causing us to question whether Imperial can provide students with diverse training.

With the loss of 17 significant lecturers, the important question is whether the current plans can provide high quality teaching and practical experience given the loss of expertise.

Will the teaching excellence provided by these lecturers be compensated for? The department will undergo a Teaching Review shortly but clearly, teaching was not taken into consideration when this restructure was put in place. A meeting earlier on in the week with Professor Ian Owens, confirmed that the basis for the restructure was to relieve Biology and Biochemistry of the current financial situation and to modernise the degrees by making them more research-based.

Moreover, we fear that the restructure will affect postgraduates and undergraduates alike with severe disruption to modules and research supervision. The current responses to the issue are inadequate and we request a meeting with you, the Rector, to discuss the following: the disruption to undergraduate modules and to pastoral support; the disruption to students with regards to supervision, marking and technical advice; the disruption to PhD students including but not limited to the removal of supervisors, co-supervisors and advisors; and to immediately address the issue of funding for affected students.

If these matters cannot be resolved, then the student body should make its displeasure known to the public through the National Student Survey and other bodies.

This letter has 376 signatures at the time of writing.

Protect tutors

Dear Sirs,

I have been shocked and upset at the details that have emerged this week of the Life Sciences ‘restructuring’. Particularly, the loss of Senior tutors, which will greatly affect the pastoral support available for students.

Unfortunately, during my time as an undergraduate at Imperial I did not find life easy. Several close members of my family passed away, including my parents. I lacked that familial support and grounding which can be all-important for a young person. For a long time, I gave up all hope of getting a degree and even considering working in Science.

However, this year I have graduated with Ecology and Environmental Science BSc, I am currently doing MRes Entomology at the Silwood Park campus and am looking ahead to a career in research.

I can honestly say that without the Life Sciences department - their patience and encouragement, particularly from Dr Simon Archer - I would not be where I am now.

I know of many other present students and Life Sciences graduates who have also benefitted from support in the department.

Francisca Sconce, MRes student, Silwood Park campus

Protect teaching

Dear Sirs,

I came to university to get an education, not fund research! Yet Imperial thinks it acceptable to callously dismiss some of the best teaching staff in the department. I think the fact that among others, the admissions tutor is going, tells you all you need to know about Imperial’s attitude towards undergraduate studies.

These cuts will massively impact on our learning in biochemistry: many of those let go were course convenors for final year modules which will now be cut from the course, and all of the names on the list were among the best lecturers in the first year.

Imperial is really shooting itself in the foot by doing this for two main reasons: those of us (biochemistry undergraduates) who were thinking of a career in research will surely think twice having seen how an allegedly world class institution treats its employees. Also, many PhD and MSc students say they wouldn’t have been inspired to do research if it hadn’t been for the stellar teaching of these members of staff.

Imperial is making a grave error in sacking many of the staff in biochemistry who give a damn about teaching.

Guy Needham (2nd year biochemistry student)

Imperial College Symphony Orchestra



"An exceptional orchestra" - Julian Lloyd Webber, world famous ce

Photo by Yin Shan Ho



...llist (Daily Telegraph, April '08)

Arts Editor: **Rox Middleton**arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

ARTS

If you read nothing else this week...**Kadhim Shubber**, Chief Editor, spills the beans on his favourite book of all time**On The Road** by Jack Kerouac

From time to time, I fancy myself as a bit of a writer. The hubris quickly passes as I flounder at the end of the first paragraph but the desire still remains. What desire you may ask (or more likely not)? It is my burning ambition to write a novel that will have the same effect on my hypothetical readers, that *On The Road* had on me.

I first read it in the summer of 2009. It electrified me. It blew my mind. It literally caused a change in the way that I think, the way that I behave and in my attitude to life in general. It wasn't only the content of the story, to which I will return, it is the style of writing that affected me so intensely. Jack Kerouac writes with a fluidity and energy that quickly reduces you to a trance-like state of frenzied reading; each sentence is consumed with great haste and growing hunger. That mastery of the 'stream of consciousness' style, of which Truman Capote short-sightedly dismissed as typing, not writing, is what begins to slowly re-wire your brain. The great speed by which Kerouac moves from thought to thought, observation to observation, had a lasting impact on me. Fickleness is one word for the result but I prefer, as inevitably my ego would force me to, carefree enthusiasm.

And that is before we have even mentioned the story! The crux is that the narrator Sal Paradise chases his beautiful band of Beat mystics across the United States time and again, in search of jazz, women, whiskey and "it". The elusive "it" which embodies those fleeting moments of joy and immortality. They drive for hours and days across the great American plains, picking up hitchhikers to pay for the gas, always searching for something new to light up their eyes and raise up their souls.

Ah see, now I've got completely over-excited about the whole thing (well it is my favourite, after all). Let me put the book in its proper context. Jack Kerouac was a published author, but hardly 'huge', living in New York in the 50s. He, and his friends who included Neal Cassady, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs, were the original 'Beats'. While he certainly had been thinking about the story, much of it autobiographical, and preparing it for a number of years, he eventually typed the entire thing in only three weeks, working almost non-stop with a continuous 120-foot roll of paper; he believed that having to change the paper on his typewriter would interrupt his natural flow of thought.

The result of that arduous effort is quite simply, a classic. It has its detractors, I find that women are less enthusiastic about it than men, but in the words of Bob Dylan: "[*On the Road*] changed my life like it changed everyone else's". Amen.

You don't have to be Felix Editor to tell the world which book you love, write it over christmas and send 300-400 words to arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Ballet

Sylvia is a magical introduction to the best ticket in London this Christmas, a night at the Royal Opera House

Jordi Brown

I was fifteen when I first went to the ballet. It was *Onegin* at the Royal Opera House, a birthday present from my mum to me and my brother. I didn't know what to expect when I went, nor what the ballet was actually about.

For me, the experience was quite alien to anything I had encountered before. I had already gone to see a few plays in the West End and a musical, but the ballet seemed to be neither and somehow both, at the same time. For those who have never seen a ballet before, the dancers 'act' through the choreography, which in turn is set to music. I left the opera house not knowing really what had happened and unable to appreciate it to any significant level. So when a friend of mine recently brought up the topic of going to the ballet I was a little apprehensive.

Six years after first entering the Royal Opera House, I was back again to see *Sylvia*. In between those years I'd like to think that I've become a little more educated in the arts. Having played in a pit orchestra myself since then, I went to the ballet at least expecting to be able to enjoy the music, if nothing else. I wasn't disappointed. The score, composed by Léo Delibes is absolutely fantastic. Unlike many other scores for other ballets (including *Onegin*) this one really does come to fore. It sets the action for the ballet and absolutely not the other way round. It is so good that even Tchaikovsky remarked "...the first ballet, where the music constitutes not only the main, but the only interest. What charm, what elegance, what richness of melody, rhythm, harmony." Delibes interestingly uses the alto saxophone in this ballet, an instrument that (at the time more so) was never really picked up by composers for big orchestral pieces – it's a striking tone – and anyone who knows it will be delighted to hear it around the third act.

The ballet itself is not based on a particularly gripping storyline. A shepherd is in love with the main character, *Sylvia*, who is captured



"Great choreography and an unbeatable orchestration combine to make this a supremely special ballet"

by an evil man. Fortunately a god, Eros, saves *Sylvia* and returns her to the shepherd. The thing that makes the ballet, as mentioned earlier by Tchaikovsky, is the choreography and heart-rending score. First choreographed by Louis Mérante in 1876, it was considered ahead of its time for its use of ballerinas as masculine huntresses, but as a whole it is still in the style of late Romantic-era ballet. The choreography was redone by Frederick Ashton in 1952 for the Royal Ballet and is far more modern and also incorporates mime. He also styled the new ballet on the leading ballerina of the time, Margot Fonteyn, and *Sylvia* herself is considered an especially difficult part to dance. On the whole, the choreography and orchestration combine to make this a supremely special ballet and I felt privileged to be able to see it. It is well worth looking out for in the future.

For the moment, the Royal Opera House is offering its traditional Christmas season. Breaking with their programme for many years, they are performing *Cinderella* instead of the *Nutcracker*. Both are equally enjoyable to newcomers and seasoned veterans alike. The *Nutcracker*, like *Sylvia*, is well known for its score by Tchaikovsky, while *Cinderella* delivers the familiar story with great choreography (again by Ashton) and an unbeatable score by Prokofiev.

The Royal Opera House itself is a magnificent building, worth visiting just for the beautiful interior. It certainly provides a most magical setting for any ballets or operas throughout the year, but nothing quite compares to Christmas time.

If you are ever going to see a ballet, this is the time to see it and with the ROH offering student discounts, this is definitely the place. **Tickets from under £10.**

A mind-blowing Stroboscopic Light Pod

Rosie Milton

James Turrell's Bindu Shards was what I can only describe as an 'experience'. I managed to obtain an elusive time slot for the exhibit which I have read elsewhere as 'mind orgasmic'. I approached with some trepidation and the usual stiff, white cube-ness of the Gagosian space on Britannia Street did not help to quell my nerves. I hurried through the white halls to the large room in the corner in which sat a spherical pod – something borrowed from a dated science-fiction movie.

I approached the pod and was greeted by two assistants wearing white coats (of course). I signed a waiver (a little more disconcerting) and listened to the description of the two programmes for my experience: hard and soft. The assistant who was elaborating on these came across as a new-wave-trip kind of girl, her voice lilting in her postulations on the kaleidoscopic strobes of the hard programme as opposed to the soft, with its bloated

shapes and melting colours. Of course I went for the hard version – I wanted to experience a heightening of senses.

So I was laid down flat on a trolley bed and propelled into the dome. I had headphones on and all around me was flat colour. What started was a kind of white noise – a droning pitch that screamed steadily up into the high octaves – highly disorientating me as the colour in front of my eyes started to pulsate. I immediately put my hand up into the air to 'ground'

"I began to see galaxies and orbiting planets in my eyes"

myself. Then the strobes began. Flashes of colour mesmerising in their rhythm, I experienced a strange sensation (with nothing to focus on), my eyes half-closed and the colour moved as if into my mind. Yes, it sounds a little psychedelic but

there's really no other way to describe it. My mind was tricked – my eyes felt as if they were closed in sleep – I did not blink for most of the duration. I had not known what to expect at the beginning – perhaps a video montage similar to the scene in the 1975 film *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory* when they're in the tunnel on the chocolate river. A terrifying melee of imagery – spiders and screaming mouths, colour and foam.

But instead it was just stroboscopic light, and I began to see galaxies and orbiting planets in my eyes. It was truly fantastic! I emerged feeling as if my brain had been minced and now scrubbed raw. I was grateful for the grey light of the dim chamber outside the pod. I was then ushered into a side-room with a squat white staircase, at the top of which sat a brilliant square of colour. As I approached I realised that this was a doorway to another capsule – a room flooded with colour! I was transported back to the Millennium Dome, when I

visited in 2000 with my school and we all 'regenerated' in the 'Chill-Out Zone' – a facility I have now learnt was designed by Turrell himself. Back in the Gagosian I hovered for a long while, lost in the slowly-changing palette of light, which soothed my mind and eyes. Turrell is a genius of light – he understands

its power to magically alter your frame of mind through the eyes, from electrified to supple and dreamlike. He's one of the best contemporary installation artists.

Bindu Shards at the Gagosian Gallery until 10 December



James Turrell, *Dhatu*, 2010, Mixed Media. It's over now, sucks to be us...

FELA! Leave your shy outside

Caz Knight

Musician. Freedom fighter. Sax, trumpet and keyboard player. Polygamist. Fela Ransome Kuti, the Father of Afrobeat, was something of a phenomenon. His infectious and politically charged music was quick to sweep the African continent and then the world throughout the 70s and beyond. He created a wild and free counter-culture against what was a tyrannically controlled, neo-colonial Nigeria. And he had an absolute blast while he did it.

It is no longer 2010 and we are no longer on London's Southbank. The auditorium of the Olivier Theatre has been

transformed by colourful, crazy artwork, slogans of protest, a live band and draped with the flags of the fifty countries of Africa. We are now at the Shrine – Fela's infamous Lagos club – and it is 1978. Nigeria is still in disarray from an oil crisis and a military coup three years before: British colonialists swapped for military ones. We watch the man himself sing, dance, entertain and involve the crowd with the help of scantily clad dancers and a roaring live band, his Africa 70. Watching the dazzling cast is like crashing a party that was going on anyway; there's such apparent spontaneity that it's hard not to smile and feel frustrated at being confined to one's seat.

The show is close to three hours of whirlwind colour, drumming and booty shaking – pure energy. It is dazzling, a riotous rollercoaster ride. The Nigerian zeal and lust for life is there and palpable both on stage and among the audience. But its tempo and variety is such that it does not become overbearing. The frenetic dance and music scenes are broken down with anecdotes about past run-ins with the police told while Fela puffs on a fat one – Igbo – and some audience participation (be ready to get off your ass and gyrate that pelvis). Sahr Ngaujah is flawless and gives a seamless performance with unending vigour as the man himself. Praise is needed for

Paulette Ivory's jaw-dropping voice in the role of Sandra also, the American girl who turns Fela on to the ideas of the Black Movement.

As well as all the frivolity one expects from Lagos' most notorious club, FELA! manages to shock us with the violence and gravity of what was being carried out by the dictatorship at the time. Equally moving is the final scene where coffin after coffin is brought onto stage as a chilling reminder of the horrors that occurred against Africans in both Nigeria and in America.

Designer Marina Draghici has done a stupendous job, with costumes and make up worn superbly by the Queens, although both the wardrobe and artwork that adorns the theatre seem to have undergone a slight day-glo make over, if archive footage of the real Shrine is any-

thing to go by.

Bill T. Jones is the multi-talented director, writer and choreographer of this piece which has run both Off and On Broadway before arriving at the National. Produced in association with the likes of Jay-Z and Will Smith, the idea was originally conceived by Stephen Hendel who was inspired after listening to Fela's music to pay homage to his achievements for human rights in Nigeria.

For a first hand experience of the New Africa Shrine, head over to Lagos in October, where each year Fela's sons lead the 'Felabration', commemorating and celebrating the life of this revered pioneer. Even if you can't afford the flights to Nigeria or not, don't miss FELA! at the NT

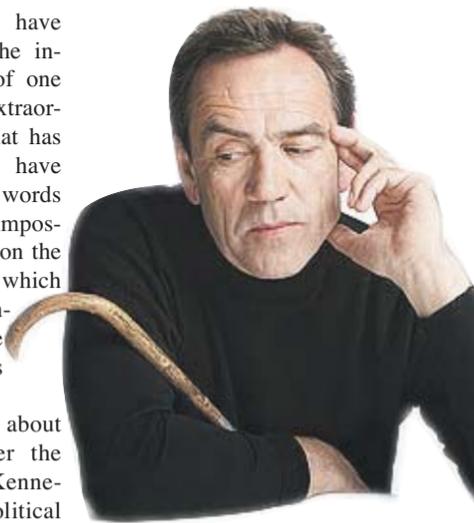
Until 23rd January. From £10

GREEK TREATS IN ONASSIS

Kathy Christofidou

Many people have marveled at the incredible life of one of the most extraordinary men that has ever lived. Many biographers have tried to capture his essence in words but it is inevitably a rather impossible task. This play is based upon the book *"Nemesis"* by Peter Evans which focuses on the complex relationships between Onassis, Jackie Kennedy and the eternal mistress – Maria Callas.

The plot reveals a great deal about Onassis' attempts to win over the greatest prize of all – Jackie Kennedy, while cleverly setting the political



situation after the death of President Kennedy. At the same time, the turbulent relationship between Maria Callas and Onassis is unraveled, although I felt that it could be further developed and clarified on stage. The play is unavoidably driven by the emotions of the characters and builds up to the great guilt that would follow Onassis to his deathbed.

Robert Lindsey's performance was accomplished during most of the dramatic parts of the play; however it vaguely resembled his performance in *"My Family"* at the comic parts. On the contrary, Sue Kelvin had me missing my grandmother a great deal with her overwhelming talent and Anna

Francolini's Callas was simply magnificent.

Being Greek by ethnicity, I walked into the theatre with high expectations about a story so closely linked to my culture. I was pleasantly surprised with the appropriateness of the Greek music that was used in the play but I could not help but cringe at the accents.

All-in-all though, the performance left a smile on my face and an unexplained nostalgia for an era that I never got to experience. I would definitely recommend it to anyone who likes a really cynical fairytale.

Onassis at the Novello Theatre until 8 January. From £12.50

Arts Editor: **Rox Middleton**arts.felix@imperial.ac.uk

ARTS

A whimsical cultural anecdote for the last issue of the term**Sam Furse** tried to go the opera, did he make it though?

I think most people have done things they regret, of one sort or another, during their lives. Taking the wrong job, choosing the wrong degree even. But mine, well mine was more of the regret of a mistake than anything. I once bought a couple of tickets to touring Glyndebourne. In case you've not heard of it, this is the travelling arm of a well-regarded Opera company. However, I didn't see it, so don't worry, this isn't about Opera.

I had originally bought said tickets because I wanted to go and see this Opera, and even had a guest in mind as well. She had expressed a passing interest in it, but her presence soon evaporated and I can't so much as recall her name now, so that part of it mattered little enough even to reach the *vorspiel*.

Trouble is, I had two tickets for Glyndebourne and only one bum to put on those two seats. They were my favourite seats, too -- at the front of the balcony; ideal for the view and for the purse.

So, I had two good tickets and no one to go with. Aha, hang on, it was my friend Sophie's birthday. We'd been at school together and although she was radiant and the sort of woman whom one thinks to be ideal as a girlfriend in every particular, there was never a spark between us. Also it was her birthday and so would be some sort of present. The fateful day came but despite -- or perhaps because of this -- it all went rather wrong for me.

The curse of Don Giovanni is a peculiar one. In the Opera there is no curse at all really, I use that term merely to name my bollocking it up as I did. The character Don Giovanni is an inveterate womaniser who at one point in the story is reading out a list of all his conquests -- the number of Spanish women, of Italian women, and so on. Shortly after this sexual bean-counting, he tries to pull his manservant's fiancé, the evening before her wedding. This gets spotted by a statue and either out of limestone-based jealousy or a masonry moral erectitude, he gives Don Giovanni the option to repent. He doesn't, and so gets thrown into the fires of Hell. It's known as the Terror scene because it is the first depiction in Opera of pure terror.

Not really what you would choose for a first date you might say. Alright, I'll give you that. But, I was going with Sophie rather than anyone I was keen to impress romantically so that was alright. Trouble was, I was slightly late leaving my flat that afternoon. And as this was before the time in which Railway companies told you where the two halves of a train were, and so perhaps predictably, I got on the wrong half. Ooops. My friend came down from Leicester, to Oxford, but of course I didn't get there. Double oops. And it was her birthday. Triple oops. And we didn't get to see the Opera. Quadruple oops. I haven't been to the Opera since. Well, not quite. As an end-of-PhD present, my parents have offered to fly me to Prague to see this cursed Opera to the very Opera house where this opera was first premiered in 1787, but it is the last Opera house still standing that Mozart conducted in. No pressure then. One last post script -- I was invited to Sophie's wedding earlier this year, so she doesn't hold it against me, even if I do.

Marks and Stencils

Graffiti? Graphics? Fine Art? It's even got its own gallery**Meredith Thomas**

In the tired and increasingly tedious debate surrounding the merits and worthiness of contemporary art nothing gives rise to quiet so much as the work of the 'street artist', a sub-group of the common vandal. I am very nervous about wading into the debate, but a recent visit to an exhibition entitled 'Marks and Stencils' has inevitably set me thinking. I am normally of the opinion that if it looks like art, smells like art and most importantly costs as much as art... then it is probably art. This philosophy should place the work of people like the infamous Banksy, featured at the gallery, firmly in the established artist's category. Yet I remain a little uncomfortable with the unquestioning, reverence surrounding the genre.

Pictures on Walls (POW), hosted the exhibition. The group is essentially a marketing company which displays and sells works and prints by many notable street artists including Banksy. Their latest exhibition displayed in a shop in Soho contains work from dozens of artist. However, most of the focus is directed towards their "cover star" Dran. This French artist has a distinctive whimsical wit yet his subject matter remains darkly satirical. In one series of works he takes cardboard boxes, subverting the text on the side with beautiful illustrations. Below "Made in Brazil" sits a starving street child and below "frais de livraison gratuits" a truck full of militia. Dran also invents the character of a homeless orphan obsessed with graffiti. He reproduced the image of this child drawing on a wall a hundred times, filling in a

different graffiti each time. Visitors are invited to do the same on postcard sized reproductions. A rather quaint idea, although I am not sure what the point is, apart from to produce a lot of sellable art very quickly. I was generally impressed by the humour and intelligence of his work which is matched by an accomplished drawing style.

The other unavoidable artist supplied the most controversial exhibit, which has been given pride of place in the window. The striking image entitled Prime by Mark Sinckler shows the London bus destroyed on the day of the 7/7 bombings. The victims of the bombing are painted in the style of renaissance angels ascending to heaven. "What I'm trying to do is to make anyone that has a faith, a belief, or an idea they hold close to their heart to think about the impact of these ideas when they leave their heads," Sinckler has said. I genuinely think the piece provokes that response. Despite the inevitable negative press attracted by the piece I found it rather compelling and beautiful. Dran and Sinckler's work actually feels out of pace with the rest of the show which consisted mostly of variably witty, often obscene cartoons or graffiti.

I left the gallery both amused and filled with anti-establishment fury as the artists intended. So am I so unwilling to praise them? Firstly, an observation; for a group who used to relish anonymity and who previously refused to engage with the art community Banky and co. seem to be making rather a lot of money by flogging stencils of rats to London yuppies. But then that is exactly the smug self-referential contradic-

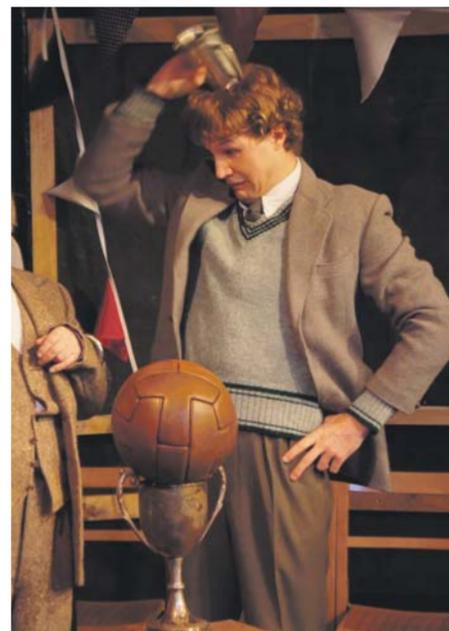
tion he takes pleasure in creating. In fact much of the work in the gallery is a direct insult to the viewer for taking it seriously or the artist for selling out. For example the slogan "Street art, now in a gallery near you" is daubed on one of the walls. Another sculpture consists of a broken plaster cast of Myron's "Discus Thrower" covered in random doodling. Yes it is funny, but it is also a very cheap form of humour, equivalent to breaking the fourth wall in film. It puts me in mind of a form of Pop art, but out of context and sixty years too late. You cannot expect your Anti-war/capitalist/fascist agenda to be taken seriously while undermining your very mode of communication.

Secondly, it comes down to this, there is a name for someone who creates images simply to entertain and sell an idea. It is not artist. It is graphics designer, someone in advertising. Art in general should elicit a more fundamental and visceral response from the viewer than a simple chuckle and a vague desire to have the print hanging over your sofa back at the flat. So, go see the exhibition, it's good fun. Just do not expect an epiphany.

"The thing I hate the most about advertising is that it attracts all the bright, creative and ambitious young people, leaving us mainly with the slow and self-obsessed to become our artists.. Modern art is a disaster area. Never in the field of human history has so much been used by so many to say so little." -- Banksy

Free at 1 Berwick St, Soho, until 22 December. New works added daily

Waugh: What is it good for?

**Will Prince**

It's in theatres like the Old Red Lion, that remind me why I review plays instead of just going to the see them. They want me to like them, and they have a bar -- did I mention it was a pub-theatre? It's a simple, yet highly effective equation. Regrettably though, it seems ORL had banked on the bar doing the talking and had overlooked a key point, viz. the play itself.

Sylvester McCoy, one time Dr. Who star and generally cuddly old man, leads the way in this production of *Decline and Fall*. It tells of the... err... decline and fall of Paul Pennyfeather, from his expulsion from Oxford, onto his cuckolded marriage to the wealthy Margot Beste-Chetwynde and then to all that befell him thereafter. The cast is, without exception, pretty well suited to each of their respective roles, McCoy hams it up no end, whilst Mike Lindall is beaten from pillar to post so much that it seems it comes to him naturally. Emily

Murphy in her multiple roles during the play is also worth a mention, especially as she intimidates the audience into filling up the few seats of the intimate venue.

For those fans of Waugh out there, I warn you may be disappointed. Soon you begin to realize why he wrote books rather than plays, and you often get a sense that this book wasn't meant to be a play. The number of scene changes alone makes you wish you were at home with book. Whilst the intricacies of the satire are lost, nevertheless, certain elements are still preserved and the play still keeps the humour high throughout.

ORL is a brilliant theatre, beyond just the beer taps, but even Sylvester McCoy couldn't turn around *Decline & Fall*. Whilst it entertains, it leaves little the audience feeling a little empty-handed, not with the acerbic pang one expects from Waugh.

Tickets from £11 until 8 January

End of term theatrics at the Union

Two plays before Monday, but what sort of AmDram are you letting yourself in for?

Christina Flanagan

I guarantee you've never seen a play like *The Dark Side* before. Knitting, murder, star-crossed lovers... this show has it all. The actors of Imperial's **Dramsoc** are on their usual outstanding form, and as always I absolutely loved watching them, but that's only the Light Side of the play. This play is really all about Dramsoc's Dark Side (ie. the techies: sets, lighting, sound and so much more) and as such allows them free reign to play with loads of cool stuff and make some terrifyingly loud bangs.

What I enjoyed most about the play is how it explores the illusions of the theatre – how good acting and some fantastic effects can get inside our heads and make us believe things that are beyond all reason or logic. Co-director and author Shamini Bundell's intention is to break the so called fourth wall separating her audience from the play and to really make us think about how the theatre actually works. To this end the actors talk directly to us, serenade us and even partly dismantle their own stage at one point, pulling us right inside their world.

The plot, centred on Imperial's own Knit-Sock, is a little tenuous at times and certain moments are bordering on silly, but if you accept that this is a comedy and approach it in a light-hearted spirit there are plenty of laughs. Some of the theatrical and sci-fi references might have made more sense to the cast than to me but I thought Mike Lewis's socially inept romantic lead Josh was very funny and surprisingly winning and I especially loved the Facebook gags. Shamini's little adaptations of Shakespeare throughout are really witty! Although, inevitably, some Imperial stereotypes are drawn on it definitely stays the amusing side of cringy, and I would like to voice a special appreciation of the Union Bar set which should leave you gagging for a drink in the interval!

Helen Poulson is in her first year with Dramsoc and I thought she was brilliantly cast as Anna, a bemused and frustrated outsider to this bizarre theatrical world. Her acting is very expressive and she totally and completely got me on side. The play cleverly highlights her lack of identity as the "normal" one trapped in a very abnormal situation where nobody else seems to care about the odd mysterious death or two.

It could take a little while to relax into the melodrama but the actors do some great dying and I love the idea of a play within a play within a play. Thankfully, *The Dark Side* stays the clever side of confusing. I have no idea how Shamini's imagination produced this crazy mix but it somehow works and is perfectly executed.

I had the privilege of seeing this play at a point where the real Dark Side were still perfecting their role and they thoroughly deserve this tribute to their tremendously hard behind-the-scenes work.

The Dark Side | Imperial Collage

Friday/Saturday | Sunday/Monday

Will Prince

Probably muscled out by many of the 355 clubs and societies available to you at Imperial, Musical Theatre Society wasn't one that was at the forefront of my consciousness. Not doubt as you will see, they were busy observing Freshers' Fayre than partaking in it. Consequently, in my ignorance, when the assignment crashed into my inbox, I was left more bemused at the task than excited. Music? Theatre? Imperial? Surely a lethal mix?

But a brave few have dared to experiment, and a little to my surprise and much to my gladness, their results are astounding. *Imperial Collage* is this term's offering from MT-Soc, a musical revue made up of one part distilled essence of Imperial, one part ingenious lyrics and one part catchy show tunes. The brainchild of Gilead Amit, someone who himself embodies a little bit of what it is to be Imperial, it is "largely based on all the anecdotes I've picked up over my three years here." Well, clearly Mr. Amit is a very busy man, either that or highly efficient; the quantity, density and detail of references to Imperial's eccentricities and idiosyncrasies are the kind of thing Herodotus would have dreamt of. Touching on the plight of Nobel-prize assisting research assistants in search of recognition and professorial caffeine-addiction, the revue really does cover all bases of Imperial, into several dimensions, even capped off with a cameo from Robert Winston.

The plot is set loosely around the unraveling of a Freshers' Fayre, where things escalate after the Light Arm's Society misplaces a weapon – imagine that to music. Along the way we meet the entire ensemble cast of IC, carried all the while with cleverly re-written songs, the tunes of which anyone will recognize. The continuing feud between news website Live and newspaper Felix (we thank you again for your readership), the maniacal rector and his filing cabinet driving range, the stresses of being Union President and the strains of doing a PhD. in Aeronautics are all recounted in songs, the breadth of which is astounding. Highlights include great adaptations from *Westside Story* and *Avenue Q*, along with the *Pirates of Penzance* and *Les Mis*, giving us a glimpse of our own Tonies, Marias, Fantines and even Major Generals at Imperial.

The whole production is done without a single iota of pretension, MTSoc does everything with gusto and a sense of humour. And in *Imperial Collage*, they have a revue that is deep, polished and, strangely at times, very perspicacious. Many a true word is said in jest, and there's certainly a few sung to a tune in *Collage* – those wanting a little insight into the university's workings would do well to give this a watch. And for us on the inside, through a combination of delicately layered and emotionally engaging plot, unceasingly well-pitched humour and acute observation, it's sure to tap into an Imperial part of all of us.



Dramsoc's *The Dark Side* in rehearsal, they'd been putting the set together with strong glue

MUSIC

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Album of The Week



iamamiwhoami
'BOUNTY' & 'In Concert'

Easily the most ambitious musical campaign in the history of the Internet, iamamiwhoami uploaded a series of YouTube videos from December 2009 onwards, culminating in an incredible online "concert" experience, shared by thousands of fans. After much speculation over the identity of the artist, it was revealed that Swedish pop singer Jonna Lee was behind the affair, with the project being seemingly self-financed. Seven equally incredible songs were released on iTunes/Amazon, along with live altered versions. These electronic pop "albums" are in fact some of the most groundbreaking music to grace our ears and are sure to garner increasing adoration over years to come.

Greg Power

Most listened to this week by Felix Music members on last.fm

1. Laura Marling
2. Four Tet
3. Johnny Foreiner
4. Duck Sauce
5. Broken Social Scene
6. LCD Soundsystem
7. Bloc Party
8. Caravan Palace
9. The Avalanches
10. Ludovico Einaudi

Join in at: <http://www.last.fm/group/Felix+Music>

Make sure not to miss

Bonobo

Troxy, Commercial Road
Saturday 11th December 2010

Bonobo's fourth album 'Black Sands' might have missed out on being an album of the year, but it is certainly worth an honourable mention. Playing the Troxy this Saturday in a rare UK show with a full live band, he will be showcasing his trademark fusion of jazzy melodies, electronica and hip hop beats. Although it might be a bit steep at £30 a pop, it's undoubtedly going to be good.



The Drums play the Forum

Not the first drums to play at The Forum, however they may be the first to have taken human form

The Drums
The Forum
24th November 2010
★★★★☆

Daniel Beatrup

The Drums took to the stage in a euphoric daze to the sound of electronic ambience that echoed the electro-pop roots of founder members Jonathan Pierce (vocals) and Jacob Graham (guitar). The four-piece were complete with Tom Haslow on guitar and Connor Hanwick providing the drums.

First up was *Best Friend* which in this writer's opinion is the band's second best song. It has a catchy tune to which you could imagine dancing along at a wedding or some other family function involving the older generations, without the risk of offending Granny or Grandpa.

Pierce put in a strong performance throughout, not just vocally but also with his animated dance moves. His energy filled the room and seemed to infect its inhabitants, with everyone swaying on cue.

Set highlight *Let's Go Surfing* prompted the infamous "rock on" gesture from one member of the audience (who would probably like to remain anonymous). The simple and yet effective riffs were a real crowd-pleaser.

You may have noticed, however, that I've only named two of the songs performed. That



Here are The Drums, conveniently pictured from left to right: Snare, Tom-Tom, Floor-Tom and Bongo... Bongo feels a little left out as he's not a standard part of the kit... He'll get over it

may be because they were the only songs I knew going into the gig or, more likely, because all their songs sound the same. For all **The Drums** effort and enthusiasm in their live performances, there isn't a lot to their music.

Lacking depth and any real substance, their songs consist of straightforward motifs with a big dollop of teenage angst, possibly accounting for their limited and somewhat juvenile demographics.

Holy Fuck...

Chaos and noise, as Holy Fuck dominate the Electric Ballroom. What? That's their name!

Holy Fuck
Electric Ballroom
15th November 2010
★★★★☆

Jamie Fraser



Holy Fuck are a chaotic band. Every song they play seemingly warrants an additional instrument, and every new musical nuance is brought about by haggard old equipment on the verge of falling apart. One moment in the set sees a band member amplifying film being wrenched off a reel to add to the epic din.

It could, and perhaps should, all fall to pieces; splinter off in all directions and break down into a formless mess. However, it is the presence of the powerful bass and drums of Matt McQuaid and Matt Schulz that holds the music together, providing the perfect foil for the two noisemakers that make up the rest of the band. Every wayward sound is anchored by their locked-in grooves, and the results are thrilling to witness.

Traditionally an improvisational group, **Holy Fuck** have taken a turn towards more conven-

tional songwriting on their new album, *Latin*, which places a greater emphasis on the development of melodies throughout the tracks than the group's more pummeling earlier albums. Interestingly, it is the new tracks that suffer the most in a live context – the final synth wash that plays out the last third of *Latin America* gets almost entirely lost in the mix, and a shortened *P.I.G.S.* loses some of its slow-burning power. Looser numbers, such as *The Pulse*, allow the band to let rip and show what made **Holy Fuck** such an exciting live prospect in the first place. These earlier songs, lacking the constraints of song structure, allow the chaos inherent in the band's set-up to become the band's strength, as they let the rhythm dictate the song's form while noises, melodies and everything in between are piled on in relentless abundance.

MUSIC

The Best of 2010!

Reflection of this last year, has brought tears and smiles, but all that really matters here, is the music that accompanies the ride. Lovingly, we have conjured up the most exciting music to come from this last year... Now wise up!

Four Tet
There Is Love In You



Moving away from his past eclectic and ambient sound, Putney's **Four Tet** migrates towards a more electro branch of IDM. This album encapsulates the listener, it's dreamy and understated, slowly enveloping you more and more with each successive listen. His exceptional *Rounds* may still herald his absolute best work, but this is not far behind at all.

Beach House
Teen Dream



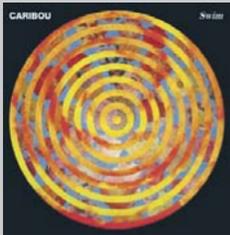
Beach House have created an album where you can take a few minutes out of a day, listen to it, and forget about everything in the world. It's a collection of rippling sound pulses, dreamy drones and the wonder of a truly unique voice which has echoes of Velvet Underground's *Nico*. It is a musical haze of suspended time, which takes you sonic travelling into bright, positive music.

Arcade Fire
The Suburbs



It was an anxious wait for **Arcade Fire**'s third album. Anything less than fantastic would have been a blemish on their catalogue. The first time I heard *The Suburbs* I wasn't blown away, but with more time to digest a better appreciation becomes evident. The sound is less sprawling than *Funeral* and feels more focussed towards stadiums than *Neon Bible*.

Caribou
Swim



Dan Snaith (Aka **Caribou**) is an Imperial Alumnus, and no doubt his PhD entitled *Overconvergent Siegel Modular Symbols* psyched him up good and proper to get some truly stellar music unleashed on the world. *Swim* is written about learning to do so, and the music swirls, splashes, and ripples with lush production, making this album one the years best aural delights.

Deerhunter
Halcyon Digest



Halcyon Digest is a real 'grower', anchored by Bradford Cox's confident, unique vocals, which unfurl in a drifting and languorous fashion. Having moved past the 'ambient punk' of previous albums to more '60s influenced sounds, they display their expanded musical vocabulary in the album's highlight *Coronado*, proving that the band can do joyous just as well as hazy.

No Age
Everything In Between



No Age's second album opens with the slow-burning stunner *Life Prowler*, and only gets better from there. A ragged punk band that operate at the point where noise becomes melody, they temper powerful rock (*Fever Dreaming*) with piercing pop (*Glitter*) and more ambient pieces (*Dusted*) to give a rough diamond of album: one that's bruising and beautiful.

Bonobo
Black Sands



The laid back grooves and cut up samples of **Bonobo** are easy enough to enjoy, but closer listening reveals a depth of complexity. Jazzy melodies fuse with hip hot beats, overlaid with sweet female vocals. The mixture of several genres make this a particularly rewarding listen and is distinctly contemporary.

Holy Fuck
Latin



Holy Fuck flirted with melody on their previous album. On *Latin* they have taken to that song's approach, and have made a fantastic album in the process. Their music is still based around the restless rhythms that defined them, but here the songs progress and build, becoming more tuneful and potent as they race towards their epic conclusions.

Titus Andronicus
The Monitor



A concept album using the American Civil War as an allegory for our modern world's troubles. Equal parts Springsteen stadium rock and Pogues-like punk energy, full of infectious songs like the ultimate whiskey-swiggin' anthem *Theme From Cheers*, the album is a glorious success. Proof that rock isn't dead, and that there is still beauty to be found in gritty vocals.

Kanye West
M.B.D.I.F.



Costing a reported \$3 million to make – it's stuffed with guest stars and it's seventy minutes long – yet it leaps these hurdles effortlessly due to West's singular vision. His rapping is at its peak, and the arrangements are near flawless. It's that rare type of album – one so stuffed with highlights that it demands to be consumed in a single listen. A masterpiece.

An Alternative Best Playlist from 2010

Feeling disappointed by our top albums from 2010?

Here is an alternative. **Tytus Murphy**, gives his top records from 2010. Admittedly, there is some overlap but this is no reflection on restricted music taste, but merit to some real, exciting and impressive music of these times!

Joanna Newsom
Good Intentions Paving Company

Shearwater
Meridian

Beach House
Used To Be

Tindersticks
Keep you beautiful

Serafina Steer
GSOH

Joe Pug
Unsophisticated heart

The National
England

Mountain Man
Animal Tracks

Arcade Fire
We Used To Wait

Avi Buffalo
What's it in for?

If you want to share a mind-blowing playlist send it in to music.felix@gmail.com

MUSIC

Music Editors: **Greg Power**
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The National do it their way

The National preach to the converted as they captivate the Brixton Academy

The National
Brixton Academy
 24th November 2010

Tytus Murphy

The National originate from Ohio. They are made up of vocalist Matt Berninger who fronts two pairs of brothers: Aaron (guitar, bass, piano) and Bryce Dessner (guitar); and Scott (bass, guitar) and Bryan Devendorf (drums). Collectively they continue to create the most enigmatic, hermetic and beautifully absorbing music. In my opinion they are currently the most exceptional band in the world and this evening I am privileged to witness their completing a trio of sold out nights at Brixton Academy.

Such fanatical sentiment in regard to **The National** is not new. Indeed, while many were already professed devotees, this band first sucked me in 2009 during the post-*Boxer* era. This alluring LP had already propelled **The National** into the lime light, with the Democrats campaign adopting the record's signature track 'Fake Empire' as they headed for the White House.

Soon after my first looped listens of *Boxer* I would discover that **The National's** own rise did not quite match the majestic nature of Mr Obama's 2009 ascent. The early stages of their journey included gigs supporting high school bands and numerous occasions where the towel was nearly thrown in. Thankfully, they persevered, spurred on by a dogged belief that their way is the best way, seamlessly alternating between low-fi garage rock and orchestral



Unfortunately the handy bag and bicycle pictured are not official members of The National... They are in my line-up.

arrangements with sublime brass and strings. Their obsessive and perfectionist tendencies in recording has ensured each of their 5 records has evolved from its predecessor, permitting them to slowly build a cult following, much in the mould of an early **R.E.M.**

The 5,000 in attendance this evening ardently welcome the five-piece. In the nervous excitement emanating from both the band and the crowd it takes about 3 songs for things to settle and the band to find their groove. Berninger prowls around the band, slapping his thighs in a trance-like state in between compelling the crowd with one of the great modern day baritones. The Dessners' and Devendorfs' hit sweet spots in their rhythms and guitar licks, all backed up with melodic keys and el-

egant brass. This evening the National are poetic and heartfelt but never pretentious or self-indulgent. Their banter is humble and humorous; the music ornate and sublime.

Iconic front men channel the genius and spirit of seminal bands, Thom Yorke, Michael Stipe, Robert Smith et al. all uniquely embody the essence of the music they front. Similarly, Berninger is the perfect outlet for **The National's** distinct and textured take on alternative rock music. It is difficult to take my eyes of Berninger; his frenetic movements and calm swigs of lager keep you on edge, but it is the articulate and oblique lyrics, made increasing poignant by his deep register, that keep you hooked. In the band's beginning, Berninger was often inappropriately labelled as a one-trick

bar stool poet; a decade later he is now celebrated as perhaps one of the finest wordsmiths of this generation. Ironically, some of his best narratives come in the songs most explicitly about drinking such as fan favourites *Slow Show* and *All The Wine*, both warmly received by the crowd this evening.

The National perform a Jekyll and Hyde setlist this evening. The explosive and aggressive *Abel* is impressively delivered with Berninger ferociously screaming *My Mind's Not Right*. This contrasts to the delicate finger picking of the *Green Gloves* which follows, with Berninger serenely lamenting, "falling out of touch with all my friends are somewhere getting wasted, hope they're staying glued together, I have arms for them". *Squalor Victoria* and *Sorrow* ex-

pose their dark and pensive side, whereas the infectious and melodic *Lemon-world* has a dream-like element.

Upon returning from their 'theatrical tea break' as Berninger wryly puts it, **The National** deliver a memorable encore. The anthemic *Mr November* and *Terrible Love* are played in a whirlwind and epic manner respectively, but is the closer *Vanderlye Crybaby Geeks* which makes the evening special. They perform the song *Unplugged*, encouraging all to join in the cry of 'all the very best of us, string ourselves up for love', it is an immensely uplifting ending.

Just as **Arcade Fire** have recently manage to sell out big arenas whilst maintaining their artistic integrity, **The National** are reaching a wider audience but doing it all on their own terms.

Ratatat duo flourish under the arches

Ratatat
Heaven
 07th December 2010
Katherine Portilla

This dynamic duo, formally known as **Cherry**, fired up at Heaven. A set mainly comprised of tracks from **Ratatat's** newest album *LP4*, was complemented by trippy video projections spanning the rear of the stage, creating a pleasantly multi-sensorial experience. Jungle beats were harmonised with warped collages of sorts, featuring everything from animal portraits to volcanic eruptions.

The two New York based musicians took the stage to the obvious delight of a crowd made up of an array of young

music junkies. One particularly enthusiastic fan caught himself shouting "I AM MUSIC!" in anticipation. The oddly indistinguishable, long haired and skinny jean clad duo delivered an energetic performance, alternating between electric guitars, a pair of drums and a synthesiser. The result was a unique sound ranging from hip hop in its purest form to indie electronic breaching the boundaries. Each track is a creative experiment, all of them as catchy as they are ambitious. Vocals are nearly absent from their songs, while down beat rhythms and organic textures are meshed to create a plethora of original material. Strong melodies and beautiful drops made it easy to fall into somewhat

One fan shouted "I AM MUSIC!"

of a trance, fed by an impressive light show and a sweet sound system.

Ratatat flourished as a main act, having only indulged in their music in a more mellow light in the past, I was curious to experience the genius, instrumental sound live. Finding it impossible to keep still one's body seemed to have a mind of its own; in sync with the rhythms streaming from the stage the crowd swayed to the beat. Arriving at the show with considerable hopes I left on a euphonic high.



Prior to Buckingham Palace being built in 1702, it was the site of an infamous brothel... coincidence I THINK NOT! Yeah, you think about that

MUSIC

The Tallest Man On Earth

He's probably lying about his height – The Tallest Man On Earth fills a corner of Camden with an evening of folk and poetry

The Tallest Man On Earth
Electric Ballroom
 24th November 2010
 ★★★★★☆

Diogo M Geraldes

A packed, expectant Electric Ballroom welcomed on stage **Idiot Wind's** deep enchanting voice. The simultaneously life partner and support act for Kristian Matsson comfortably slipped into the big shoes any act with a **Dylan** reference in its name has to walk on. Amanda Bergman's stunningly sweet and rough voice fused into the pretty, yet simple, melodies her Yamaha piano filled the room with, creating a quietness of approval that silenced even the more chatty spectators.

The Swedish singer-songwriter then jumped on a seemingly too big stage, armed with his best weapons: his metallic, cigarette tainted, wide-ranged voice and four guitars. From the first note in the continuous guitar-picking sequence that was his show, one could immediate-

ly witness the stage-filling personality of Sweden's best music export in the last years. **TMOE** showed that stage size doesn't matter, as his beautifully complex poetry-filled melodies can engage any soul in any venue.

Then comes a well chosen progression of songs from his critically acclaimed albums "*Shallow Grave*" and "*The Wild Hunt*" and latest EP "*Sometimes The Blues Is Just A Passing Bird*" with some quality and humorous talking interludes filling the gaps between songs. Each picture painted by his bird and countryside reference-filled poems makes you travel to a place you have never been, though it feels like you have visited it all your life. '*King of Spain*', '*The Gardner*' and '*Where Do My Bluebird Fly*' caught the crowd's attention but the power and beauty of the lyrics of '*Troubles Will Be Gone*', '*Pistol Dreams*' and '*Love Is All*' conquered our admiration.

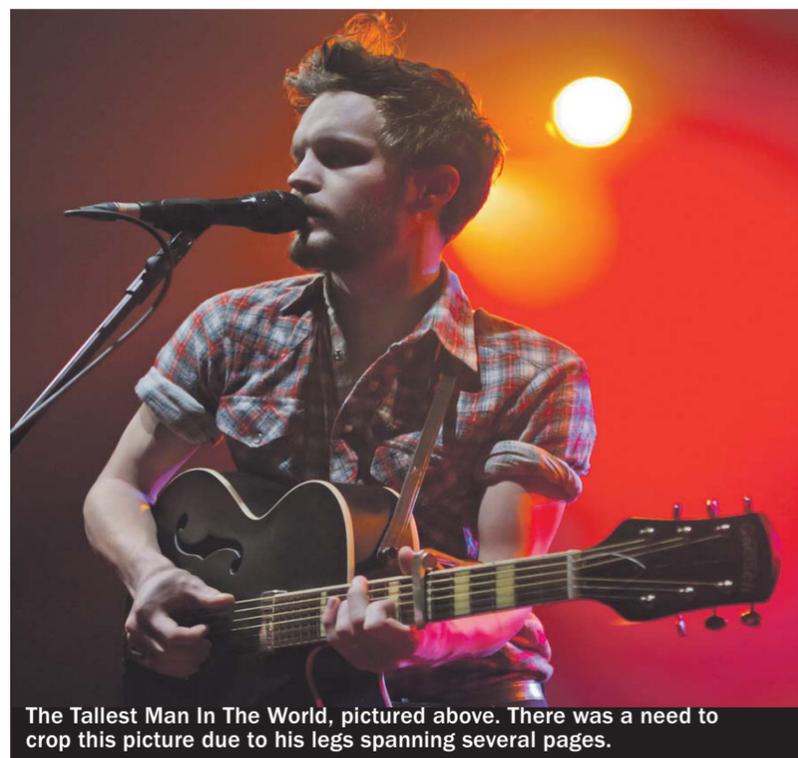
Yes, admiration. Kristian can control the progression of a melody with his

interlacing of shouts and growls with whispering and voice breaks like no one else. Even the few seconds in between songs he spent changing the tuning of his many guitars sounded perfect. But not as perfect as the end of his set, a duet interpretation of '*Thrown Right At Me*' with his soul mate.

The Tallest Man on Earth showed that he is not the new **Bob Dylan**. Anyone

"His beautifully complex poetry-filled melodies can engage any soul in any venue."

present in the Camden venue could see that he is much more than that. He is the tallest man in folk.



The Tallest Man In The World, pictured above. There was a need to crop this picture due to his legs spanning several pages.

Janelle Monáe is here to stay

The Shepherd's Bush Empire was witness to one of this year's masterpiece albums, 'ArchAndroid', from a superb songstress

Janelle Monáe
Shepherds Bush Empire
 24th November 2010

Diogo M Geraldes

Creator of "*ArchAndroid*", the 2010 R&B reinventing masterpiece soon to be omnipresent in all the end of year top albums lists (*Ed – errrr, I wouldn't look at page 35 then...*), **Janelle Monáe** has been much hyped since her destruction of SXSW 2009. Destruction indeed was what the 2000-strong audience witnessed at the Shepherd Bush Empire.

Accompanied by a super-fly, vibrating and incredibly talented entourage of dancers, exquisite bass and keyboard players, an exceptionally stylish drummer and trumpeters and a hell-raising Master of Ceremony, her majesty the 1st Lady of Coolness began the night with the high tempo explosion of '*Dance or Die*' and '*Faster*' played back to back without a single breath-catching stop.

A diva-like cover of Charlie Chaplin's '*Smile*' followed, leaving us with that astonished expression you only make when you see a future legend performing in front of you. *Janelle* then decided to keep impressing the hangover-defying public with the surreal 'Thriller'-tribute that was '*Wondaland*' and showed how versatile she by painting on canvas while outstandingly interpreting '*Make The Bus*'.

And then, as if the previous hour was not enough to have us on our knees praising Monáe's genality, the Big Boi's protégé melted her two most powerful songs, '*Cold War*' and '*Tightrope*', into one hot, crazy finale and wrapped it with a jaw-dropping one-footed sideways moonwalk.

An encore composed by a nice tribute to **The Beatles** '*I Want to Hold Your Hand*' and a performance of '*Come Alive*' that screamed "Watch me! I'll be back, and even bigger!" finished what, for me, was a perfect musical year. Let's hope 2011 is just as good, if not better.



Janelle softly stroking her secret weapon to world domination

FILM

Classic Cinema

A Muppet's Christmas Carol



The most widely accepted form of interspecies love

Whilst the 'classic' status of this film may be debatable for some, it is most certainly a Christmas classic in my home and I suspect in many others. Knowing the lyrics to all the songs and personal bias aside, it is an incredibly funny and light-hearted film that is an excellent take on the fable, successfully integrating soppy sentiment and singing vegetables into the classic Dickens tale.

Michael Caine stars as the miserable Mr Scrooge, who is introduced through the medium of song in the first scene, sweeping around the corner as darkness descends. Caine is commendable as the infamous miser and plays a convincing, almost entirely straight, part next to lots of brightly coloured singing puppets and even indulges in a bit of singing himself. As the original story goes, Scrooge is visited by three spirits, each opening his eyes to his cruel doings and eventually making him realise the errors of his ways. In the Muppets' version, a reformed Scrooge subsequently dances through the streets of London singing, followed by a very small rabbit carrying a very large turkey.

The film also features all of the Muppet stalwarts in the novel's traditional roles (and some not quite so traditional; Dickens may not have included an annual penguin's skating party, lobsters or a Swedish chef). Kermit plays Bob Cratchit and his wife, Emily Cratchit, is played, of course, by Miss Piggy. The Great Gonzo stars as the narrator – a blue furry Charles Dickens who hangs out with a rat. This rat being Rizzo the Rat, starring as himself. Needless to say, behind all these Muppet actors are the puppeteers: Frank Oz, Dave Goelz, Steve Whitmore and Jerry Nelson among them, orchestrating the cast and supplying the dizzying array of voices.

A Muppets Christmas Carol is a heartening, incredibly funny film, which maintains all the moral and suspense of the original but with added humour, puppets and singing.

Cecily Goodwin

EVENTS

iCU Cinema - Winter All-Nighter
6 films, 6pm-6am, Union Concert Hall
£10 for all six films, or £3 for each film.
Tickets available online at union.ic.ac.uk

An engaging and emotional thriller

Monsters

Director Gareth Edwards
Screenwriter Gareth Edwards
Cast Scott McNairy, Whitney Able

John Park

A film titled *Monsters* carries with it a certain level of expectation to show something – well – monstrous. Considering this, the common criticism that this micro-budget indie film lacks exactly that is fully understandable. Make no mistake, only \$200,000 was spent on the production which is nowhere near close to most CGI-loaded films, and this is not your regular “mutant monsters are taking over the planet and killing our protagonists one by one” kind of film. Instead – and this is what has been often overlooked – *Monsters* relies on the consistent, underlying tone of fear.

There are no jump-scars, as monsters are mostly heard and not seen, and are never hurled in front of the camera. So much can be unsettling about odd noises, that no forced or unnecessary gore is needed to have that profound chilling effect. This is something that has perhaps been forgotten by the Hollywood thriller genre. *The Ring*, to take a popular example, was generally well received – but its predecessor, the Japanese original, *Ringu*, is widely considered the better film, partly for not showing the face of its chilling ghoul. For those ready to explore a different side of the sci-fi/horror/thriller genre, you will be pleasantly surprised at this slightly odd but engaging film mixes several different themes and still makes it work.

Monsters starts off with how the aliens managed to land on Earth. Six years ago there was evidence of extraterrestrial life on Jupiter and the nosy humans had to send a spaceship to explore it. When it returns, it crash-lands in Mexico and brings with it some scary-looking ‘creatures’. Are they dangerous? Doesn't matter. When they look like a cross between a spider, an octopus and a jellyfish, the United States government doesn't think twice. They immediately seal off the area and start attacking. Gas-masks are essential and the area of infection stretches all the way across the US-Mexico border. The Americans have also built “The Wall,” a gigantic concrete barrier designed to keep foreign agents out.

As a photojournalist, Andrew (Scott McNairy) is working in Mexico hoping to snap up some pictures of these allegedly dangerous and toxic creatures. One day he is given an inconvenient order that he cannot refuse: his boss' daughter Sam (Whitney Able) is stuck in Mexico and he is asked to escort her safely back to the States. He reluctantly agrees, and the two set off on an uncomfortable journey back to their homeland. But complications arise as passports are lost, trains are stopped, and ships are missed. Time is running out and the only way back is through the forbidden hostile infectious



Taking precautions against the “whoever smelt it, dealt it” policy.

zone. They are also joined by armed guards which show that this fenced-off terrain is not to be taken at all lightly.

For most modern horror films, many of the plot-points are so absurd that only the most senseless characters who go off in the dark on their own to “check things out” are ever used.

This is a true testament to the very un-Hollywood idea that money can't buy horror

But not with *Monsters*, in which everything was shot on location and, aside from the two relatively unknown actors, most supporting roles are played by local extras who happened to be there. The film benefits from having this authentic atmosphere and therefore there is no need for any pointless horror clichés that waste time. This is a deeply engaging emotional drama focusing on how romance takes place in the unlikeliest circumstance. Focusing on the steadily creepy ambiance by showing the many scenes of devastation, the couple's *Apocalypse Now* style boat-ride, in which we see cars in branches, destroyed aircrafts and more evidence of horror, is a true testament to

the very un-Hollywood idea that money cannot buy horror.

This is more than a mindless horror movie. The film moves gently, at a controlled pace, giving us the chance to reflect at the subtle political themes it evokes. Even when there is hardly anything happening on screen, so many ideas have been hinted that director Gareth Edwards knows how to casually hold our attention without using his film to load us with a heavy-handed political message. Immigration, war on terror and social intolerance are among the explored subjects that further enrich the film's running time. McNairy and Able are convincing together and a lot of the improvised dialogue helps their relationship come off as unforced and compelling.

When the monsters do make their appearance in the film's final moments, the result is beautiful and moving. Edwards not only acted as director, writer, producer, but also as the visual effects supervisor and he creates something completely original with the tiny budget. Are these monsters really a threat? Although many dead bodies are seen, there is a possibility that they could have been the result of the toxic weapons that the U.S. troops used to tackle the alien population. It is also suggested that the aliens are usually docile unless provoked, most likely by endless missile strikes. Who are the real “monsters” here? What starts off with such a simple, over-used idea spirals out into a web of so many potential debates making *Monsters* one of this year's most pleasant surprises.

Film Editors: **Jade Hoffman**
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TRON returns!

TRON: Legacy

Director Joseph Kosinski
Screenwriter Edward Kitsis, Adam Horowitz
Cast Jeff Bridges, Garrett Hedlund, Olivia Wilde, Michael Sheen

Guo Heng Chin

Have you ever wondered what goes on inside the digital domain? What goes on inside the circuitry of your computer as packets of information are sent through it? Enter TRON. It is the sci-fi geek's ultimate fantasy – a whole world lying out there, inside those clusters of computer networks. The entry? Just beam yourself in with a prototype particle disruptor/reconstitutor, picked from that experimental physics lab.

The original TRON (1982) follows the adventure of genius programmer Kevin Flynn on the day he gets beamed into the Grid, the cyber world of TRON. Inside it, he teams with anthropomorphic programs TRON and RAM in their quest to defeat the tyrannical Master Control Program and liberate the Grid. TRON – though not a major box office success – was visionary. The idea that computer programs have personalities and emotions, that they live in a society with its own culture, was absolutely enticing to my inner geek. TRON was a pioneer for adopting the then-limited CGI technology into its conceptual design. Even the digital world itself, the Grid, resembles a half-finished render.

Decades later, with CGI now able to create fluid life-like characters, it spawns the remake. Here, Sam Flynn receives a mysterious message from his father, Kevin Flynn, who disappeared 20 years ago. As he traces the message,

he tumbles down the rabbit hole into TRON world and thus begins his adventure to search for his dad.

TRON: Legacy is an ambitious movie. It was shot using the most advanced 3D cameras at the time – cameras one generation above those used in *Avatar*, created by James Cameron's team especially for *TRON: Legacy*. It combines Cameron's engineering with Robert Zemeckis' digital motion-capture technology used in *The Polar Express* and *Beowulf* to bring realism to a whole new level. *TRON: Legacy* attempted something not done in movies before – to have an actor play both protagonist and antagonist, digitally rejuvenating one of them. If this sounds suspect to you, trust

TRON: Legacy has some of the most awe-striking action sequences I've seen

me, the results are so stunningly real you soon have to remind yourself they are actually the same person. Another classy touch to this film is how 3D is only used in the TRON world, rather than throughout the movie, which is certainly to the credit of the producers and director for not falling prey to '3D exploitation'.

Jeff Bridges reprises his role as Kevin Flynn. His older, grizzlier look conveniently fits the Flynn of twenty years later. He also plays the bad guy, CLU 2 (original CLU was a friendly hacking program Flynn created in TRON). CLU 2 is the face of a digitally younger (and better

looking) version of Jeff Bridges, courtesy of the guys who 'de-aged' Brad Pitt in *Benjamin Button*. Being one of the more philosophical of the Disney movies, *TRON: Legacy* is a biblical tale of a God who lost control of his creation and is in an epic struggle against his most powerful creation, his once right-hand man.

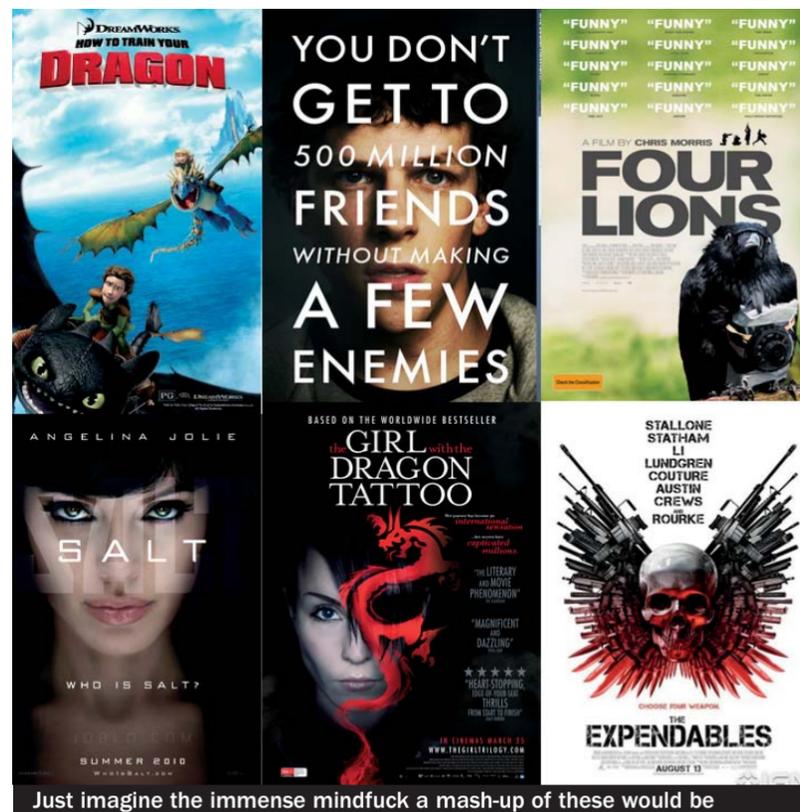
TRON: Legacy is probably the most violent Disney production to date. In the Grid, programs are pitted against each other in a brutal gladiator-style games arena that consists of disc combats and light cycle battles. The permission for violence is integral to what would probably be one of the outstanding legacies of the film: its ultra-stylishness. *TRON: Legacy* contains some of the most original and awe-striking action sequences I've seen in cinema in years and would probably set the modern paradigm for cool, in the way *The Matrix* did a decade ago.

TRON fans will be thrilled to see the evolution of classic elements like the disc wars, light cycles and the clothing especially, which now evolved beyond leotards with duct tape into an incarnation of a kinky fetishwear-inspired synthetic body-suit with glowing stripes. Yes, *TRON: Legacy* also breaks the barrier with the strongest sexual undertones a Disney production has ever had.

As if this weren't enough, Daft Punk's score is an exemplary piece of modern cinema music. A magnetic fusion of electronic and orchestral pieces, the score trembles with style and mesmerises with evocative adagios and nocturnes.

Verdict: if there's one movie you have to choose for Christmas, make it *TRON: Legacy* rather than the fairy-tale with the anthropomorphic lion or Daniel Radcliffe playing with his magic stick once again.

End of line.



The line-up for the iCU Cinema All-Nighter is announced

Jade Hoffman

The Imperial film event of the year has officially returned, announcing its line-up for the winter All-Nighter this year. As has become iCU Cinema tradition, the end of terms see a six-film all-nighter with the best films of that year being screened in one night to test the film fan's endurance.

Recently, the line-up has been announced, with the critically acclaimed David Fincher film, *The Social Network*, based on Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg's rise to riches, shining as the best of the bunch.

The rest of the films scheduled to play that night, however, follow the typical eclectic mix of the best and most enjoyable films from this year – one of the things that makes the iCU Cinema All-Nighter once again the bizarre pic-n-mix bonanza of recent cinema. Where else would you start off watching Dreamworks' family-friendly, *How to Train Your Dragon*, once again showcasing the studio's ability to create a pan-generational animation, and finish with the all-star beat-em-up, *The Expendables*?

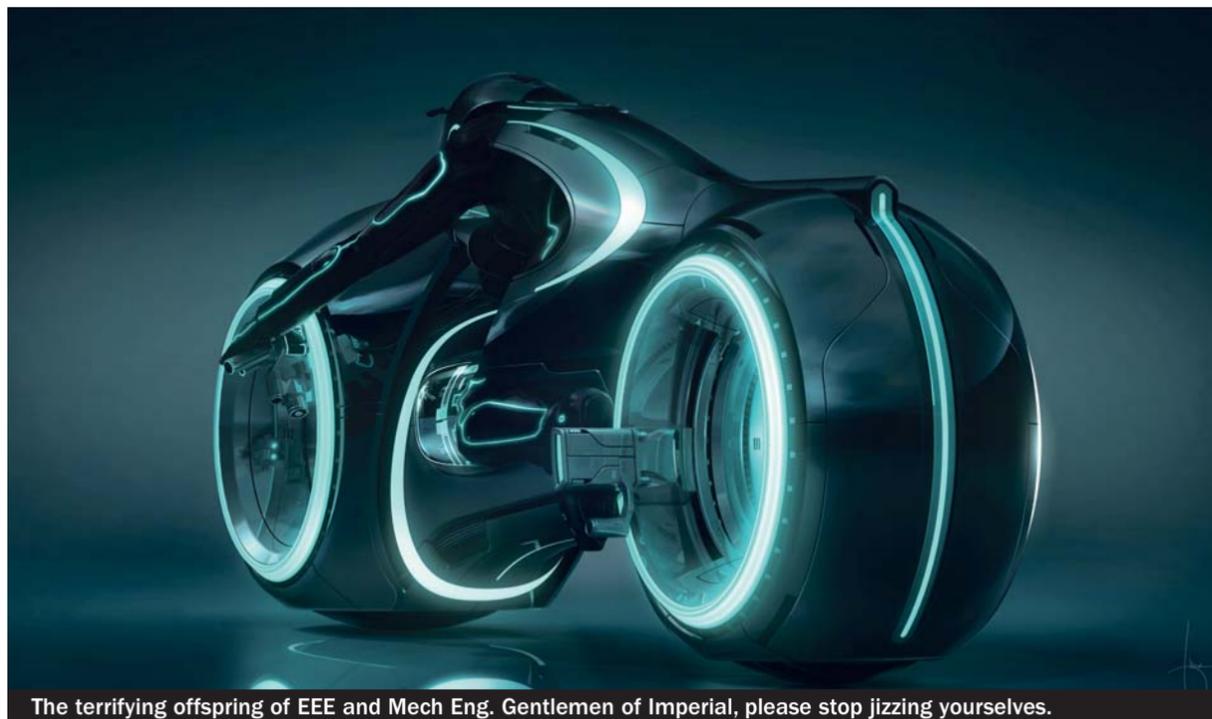
This is one of the great charms of the iCU Cinema, which frequently puts together the most unexpected mismatch of films to inexplicable success – see the earlier double-bill of *Toy Story 3* vs. *Inception* which once again saw a spectacular turnout.

Once again, with Tuesday 14th December's six-film line up that pits family film vs. controversial comedy vs. ballsy action flick, the iCU Cinema provides something for everyone. Perhaps the most obscure thing to turn up in this series is the first of Stieg Larsson's *Millenium Trilogy*, the Swedish original, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, which plays at 2.45am for those hard enough to still be awake. Considering the fact that the Union Bar will be open throughout the night, serving drinks in the intervals between films, it may be a bit much to assume many will be lucid enough to truly take in this film, but the All-Nighter provides a wonderfully heterogenous assortment of 2010's cinema. Or, if nothing else, it just gives you a nice night in towards the cold end of Christmas term.

The full line-up is as follows:

6pm: *How to Train Your Dragon*
 8pm: *The Social Network*
 10.30pm: *Four Lions*
 12.30am: *Salt*
 2.45am: *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*
 5.30am: *The Expendables*

Tickets are available online priced at £10 for all six films, or £3 each on the door. The All-Nighter will happen Tuesday 14th December in the Union Concert Hall.



The terrifying offspring of EEE and Mech Eng. Gentlemen of Imperial, please stop jizzing yourselves.

metric live

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Tony Dunne
Joe Wilkinson

10 December

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Fashion Editor: **Saskia Verhagen**

fashion.felix@imperial.ac.uk

FASHION

Felix Fashion Christmas Gift Guide

Stuck as to what to buy your mum, dad, boyfriend or girlfriend? Fear no more: we have done the hard work for you, providing inspiration whatever your budget may be

Girlfriend



Cocktail Ring

No, not that kind of ring – you commitment-phobe you. A cocktail ring is one with a large, oversized stone – precious, semi-precious or faux, depending on one's budget. Very much in vogue at the moment, these chunky pieces of jewellery have been seen from the red carpet to the haute fingers of fashion queen bee Rachel Zoe. The cocktail ring is a gift substantial enough not to earn a sniff of inadequacy, but not extravagant enough to make her feel too bad when all she's bought you is a cologne and deodorant set from Boots.

Skinted: Semi-Precious Mixed Stone Ring - £15 from topshop.com – this ring is actually a rather fabulous combination of faceted glass and turquoise, with huge bang for your buck.

Minted: YSL Arty Enamel Ring (left) - £115 from net-a-porter.com - who could say no to a piece of fashion history? The ubiquitous YSL cocktail ring is incredibly brash yet perfectly chic – a truly perfect gift.

Boyfriend



Cardigan

The single most stylish addition to a man's wardrobe, it is the ultimate combination of form and function. Adding a touch of sartorial flair to both a formal and an informal outfit, it can be layered under a smart jacket, proving not only warm but incredibly chic, or over a t-shirt with jeans. The best colours to look for are navy blue, forest green, maroon or grey marl - whatever complements his existing wardrobe. Make sure you buy a skinny-fit cardigan – it makes the most of the male figure, accentuating the waist.

Skinted: Salt and Pepper Cardigan (left) – £24 from topman.com – a great grey marl wool number, this one also comes in navy and is incredibly easy to wear – perfect with jeans or over a shirt.

Minted: Broadwindsor Cardigan – £89 from aubinandwills.com – definitely one to share, this cardigan from Jack Will's older and rather more chic brother will definitely find its way into your winter wardrobe.

Mum



Perfume

Old faithful, but with a little extra thought put in. You've bought her the same old perfume that you've seen on her dressing table year after year – it's time for a change. Don't do the standard swap and go for a bubble bath or an aromatherapy candle instead (ugh!). Actually go out and sniff out a perfume that you think she'd like, and steer clear of anything too heavy, and definitely stay well away from anything with a celebrity branding... Eau de Coleen Rooney or Jennifer Aniston may just give off the wrong impression!

Skinted: White Musk by The Body Shop - £12 at thebodyshop.co.uk – though incredibly cheap, this is a really lovely, light fragrance. The only downside is that it doesn't last as long as a proper perfume.

Minted: Philosykos by Diptyque (left) – £45 at spacenk.co.uk – a personal favourite, this scent is actually unisex; I just can't resist its fresh, blossoming scent with touches of fig and green leaves.

Dad



Gloves

There is nothing more wonderful than a pair of exquisite leather gloves on these heinously cold winter days – there's really nothing worse than cold hands and cold feet. An incredibly functional addition to the more discerning man's accessory collection, the most luxurious of them come with a cashmere lining, but range down to silk-lined and unlined. Most dads would probably be equally happy with either of the pairs below – both chic, either will definitely do the job of outdoing your sibling's attempt at yet another comedy gift.

Skinted: Green Tartan Gloves (left) – £18 at topman.com – definitely one for the city dad who thinks he's a country bumpkin, this great pair of gloves with a touch of designer flair.

Minted: Classic Silk-Lined Gloves – £65 at aspinallondon.com – handmade with butter-soft leather, this pair (in tan, brown or black) would go down a treat with anyone's dad.

Games Editor: **Simon Worthington**

GAMES

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Web Games

Each week we're going to bring you a selection of fresh, free and fun web games that you can play right away in your browser. Unless otherwise specified, you're going to need the Adobe Flash Player plug-in which can be installed from <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>.

Cat Astro Phi

photonstorm.com/games/cat-astro-phi



It has a cute kitty. It has spaceships. Is there really any more you need to know? This top-down shooting game, played in a Gameboy window that should send waves of nostalgia over anyone born in the 80s, features a tiny space man out to save his cat and escape the hostile planets on which he inevitably crash lands.

Asteroid-infested space flights sandwich each level and provide a fun distraction that inevitably sees your ship crash. You must navigate the helmeted space-man around the robot-infested planets, upgrading your guns, shooting baddies and collecting keycards and cells to power your ship. The robots actually provide some challenge and their speedy moves will frequently get the better of you.

World Conquest

facebook.com/worldconquest



It's RISK, but on Facebook! The classic world domination strategy game is recreated in pixel-perfect detail for you to play with your friends and/or strangers. Set up a private game and invite your friends for some classic turn-based action – just remember, take Asia!

When in Rome, do as the Assassins have always done

Sean Harbison builds his *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood*

After having your mind completely blown by Assassin's Creed II's preposterous ending, Brotherhood returns to connect the dots in the bizarre tale and explain what exactly is going on. But in doing so, does it bring any new and redeeming features to expand the series and is it worth it as a game in its own right?

At the core of the game remain the missions. These usually relate to tailing a target, scaling monstrous buildings to find an item, or – of course – assassinations. Unfortunately, as is almost expected, the missions really haven't changed. It's easy to see how the game is almost exactly the same as Assassin's Creed II, merely with different scenery. Understandably it is difficult to design new features into such a winning formula, however, as with the previous games it's easy to get bored by the repetitiveness of such quests. On the other hand, a good new feature is the '100% Synchronisation' goal. This gives you a challenge to complete within the quest – for example you may have to kill only your target or finish the mission in a certain amount of time. This makes the missions a lot more interesting, but it can be a bit disappointing to know you've completed the mission and not achieved the challenge, and thus have only achieved '50% synchronisation'.

The game takes place in Rome, which is now under the rule of the Borgia family, who are associated with the Templars and at war with the Assassins. They have a vendetta against Ezio (the main character) who must work his way up, gaining a team in order to take down this family and their tyrannous rule of the city. The city is split up into twelve sections, each overlooked by a so-called 'Borgia tower'. In order to restore Rome to its previous glory, Ezio must enter these towers, assassinate the captains and then burn down the towers. This allows you to then purchase the shops nearby and also open secret tunnels – a new quicker way of moving around the city. By doing this you access new equipment to unlock and also increase the income of money, much like improving Monteriggioni did in the previous game. The towers do not have to be destroyed but it makes doing missions in that area a lot easier – and it's also a lot of fun.

Destroying the towers also makes way for a new concept; buying assassins guilds. These new guilds allow you to train assassins that join your team. This is certainly a very cool feature and is very entertaining, but it really detracts from the difficulty of the game. All you have to do is press a button and a team of six assassins jump in and kill all the guards near you, meaning you have to do nothing at all. This really is a bit of a double-edged blade in all honesty for, as amusing as it is watching your assassins fly in from nowhere and destroy your enemies,



it really is like an infinite get-out-of-jail-free card. This is especially true when you consider that combat has never been difficult in this series.

Combat is once again dominated by long times of waiting for opponent attacks to simply press one button and counter and kill them immediately, with a few exceptions (including the new Borgia captains). This quickly becomes repetitive and really offers no challenge, with the only redeeming feature being the new combo animations – why just stab someone when you can also shoot them? It's impossible not to enjoy the amusing scenes that show off your entire armoury.

“As amusing as it is watching assassins fly in from nowhere, it really is an infinite get-out-of-jail-free card.”

The newest and perhaps greatest feature by far of this game, is the multiplayer. There are four modes of play for multiplayer; Wanted, Advanced Wanted, Manhunt and Alliance. These are all variations on the central idea of hunting down a target whilst avoiding being hunted down, the trick being that there are many 'civilian' NPCs who look identical to your target. Killing these people will not get you points and will lose you your target. There is also a points system for the style of kill which really benefits true assassins, as by remaining stealthy and killing your target with-

out them noticing you gain a lot more points than just running after them and alerting everyone to your presence. Wanted and Advanced Wanted are free-for-all with there being a few tweaks in the rules for Advanced Wanted. For example, the tracking device is far less accurate making you have to look out for tell tale signs before deciding whom to assassinate in order not to accidentally kill a civilian. Manhunt consists of two teams of four assassins where one team hides whilst the other hunts. Teams gain more points for working together, as a team that is hiding close together will gain far more points than a team spread out across the map. Finally, Alliance pits four teams of two assassins against one another which again relies heavily on the team working together to track down their targets and again rewards those who work together.

In conclusion I would say that Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood really is not that big a step up from the previous game. The gameplay is much the same, and if you've played the previous games it really doesn't make much of a new impression. For newcomers to the series, this is a great start with both beautiful looks and missions that for the first few tries remain entertaining. The multiplayer is a great addition to the series and brings a much needed rejuvenation.

However, it alone does not prevent the sad fact that this game isn't quite as revolutionary as its predecessors. If I were to be honest, I would tell you to wait until this game comes down in price and start on the multiplayer, as this is easily the greatest part of the game, but alone it's not worth paying full price for.

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood is available now for Xbox 360 and PS3, and will be available on PC in early 2011.

GAMES

The top titles of 2010?

The games team sounds off on their favourite game of the year

Laurence Pope picks **Dead Rising 2**

There have been some pretty fine games that I've played this year (mostly when I ought to have been revising), but I think the title of top game must go to *Dead Rising 2*. Why? Because it doesn't take itself seriously, that's why. It's off the wall. And in a world where video games try so hard to take themselves seriously, *Dead Rising 2* is like a breath of crisp mountain air.

It lets you create a whole host of crazy weapons, and lets you utilize just about any-

thing as a tool for destruction. Laser swords. Moose heads. Machine guns mounted to wheelchairs. You even get bonus points for killing with this stuff. It's over-the-top crazy zombie slaying, and it's fun as hell.

There's a completely ridiculous plot tied to the game, but considering everything else that occurs in the *DR2* universe it doesn't feel out of place. With multiple weapons and decisions to make and take, *Dead Rising 2* offers a heck of a lot of replayability.



Sean Harbison picks **Call Of Duty: Black Ops**

Well, it had to be didn't it? It's true that there is not much new or original material brought to this game but it's always the multiplayer that brings this series home. It is easy to spend vast amounts of time playing *Black Ops*, or indeed any of the more recent CoDs, as long as you can play online.

The variety in weapons, perks, and killstreaks allow you to create any style of soldier you want – and also leads to a huge amount of challenges to be completed. The

new types of online games also bring an interesting twist to the online games; the Gun Game consists of advancing weapons achieving a kill with each, starting with a pistol and ending with a ballistic knife. These new types of game means the game no longer just consists of running around shooting and stabbing at the first thing you see, but actually require you to think and take your time. And if I must mention single player – well at least it has an interesting story.



Omar Hafeez-Bore picks... **Sonic 2?**

My choice is not because of some trendy retro elitism, but one of necessity. I don't have a modern console. I don't play COD. I don't play FIFA. I don't care.

Because *Sonic 2* has proved more than able to satisfy our flat's multiplayer fix. Every day for months, my flatmate and I sat down to play *Sonic 2*. He was always Tails. I was always Sonic. He always used the official controller, whilst I used The Other One.

Aside from those fundamentals, the re-

sults were never the same. After a while it became almost obscene how well we knew the levels and how strategic our play became. So refined was our knowledge of Emerald Hill Zone that all other flatmates were effectively disqualified from ever even trying; for them it became just a spectator sport of Sonic, speed, swearing and more last minute changes of fate than ebay.

Some games don't age. *Sonic 2* is one of them.



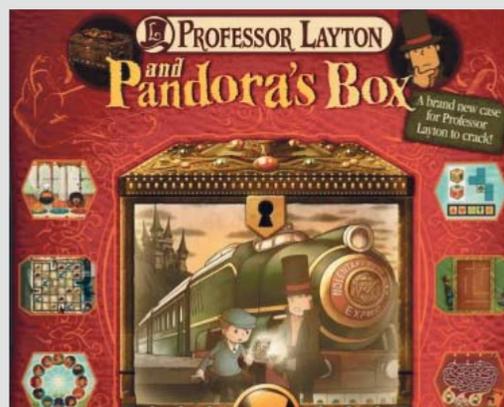
Simon Worthington picks **Professor Layton & Pandora's Box**

In a world where shooting games are merely interactive cinematics and where platformers have been reduced to the easy realm of 'kids' games, it's refreshing to find a title that can be genuinely called 'difficult'.

Pandora's Box deserves that label. Although some puzzles can be solved by pot luck, most require genuine thought. There are some real stumpers and a few I'm still yet to solve. The constant puzzling doesn't get boring either – I feared for my reputation

as I took a chance on an answer I'd guessed from a puzzle I didn't really understand.

Although I don't think the story has the same level of mystery or quality of writing as *Professor Layton and the Curious Village*, it's certainly a better game in other respects. There's more to do, more to look at and more to solve. Actually having a challenge changed *Pandora's Box* from just a game into a true experience, and an extremely compelling one at that.



Stuck for gift ideas for your pet gamer?

Laurence Pope

Do YOU LIKE GAMES? Do your FRIENDS like games? Do you even HAVE any friends? If you answered YES to these questions then READ ON.

With the Christmas season approaching, it's time to start looking for presents, and why waste time wrapping boxes when you could use Steam to deliver your expensive (or possibly not so expensive) gifts to your friends?

For the unenlightened, Steam, created by Valve Corporation (makers of *Half Life*, *Team Fortress 2*, *Left 4 Dead* and *Portal*), is a digital distribution software platform allowing electronic distribution of games and media. Currently there are over 1,200 games available on Steam from small titles by small independent developers to mainstream titles by the video gaming giants such as Bethesda and Activision. Also offered is a social networking service, multiple language support, automatic game updates, anti-cheat systems, and... well look folks, it's just a beast, take it from me. If you game on the PC and haven't downloaded it, do it now. I'll wait for you, I promise.

Steam also offers a gifting service. When you go to make a purchase, it offers you the chance to gift the game to a friend instead (who has to be registered on Steam in order to receive the game). Once the purchase is made your friend can log on and download the game immediately, and they don't have to waste time throwing away gift-wrap. And don't worry, your friend is told who gifted them the game, and can read any kind, funny or hideously obnoxious message you attached with it.

If Steam isn't quite your style, why not try GOG.com? Good Old Games is another online game service much like Steam which focuses its attention instead on the golden oldies. With over 240 titles under its belt it may be worth looking into if you prefer the older class of PC games. GOG is DRM-free and also offers a gifting service, much like Steam, where you are given an option to gift instead of buy a game for yourself. Your friend receives an email containing a virtual gift certificate and by going to the site they can 'open' their present – provided they have an account, of course, but setting one up is quick and easy and is something most Imperial students are likely capable of. Hopefully.



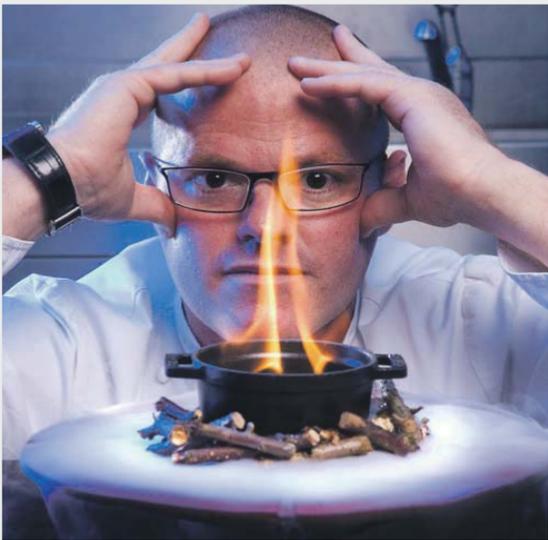
Food Editor: **Dana Li**

FOOD

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Gastronomical news

Dana says:



To add to the crazy eBay sales for Heston Blumenthal's Hidden Orange Christmas Puddings, I'd like to point out that his new restaurant dinner in Knightsbridge's Mandarin Oriental Hotel is now taking bookings for when they open on 31st January. Three course set lunch from £25, with an a la carte dinner from £55. Dinner does not promise the same spectacular feasts that were featured on Heston's shows, rather, simple contemporary dishes that take their influence from gastronomic recipes dating from the 16th century such as Scallops with Cucumber Ketchup and Peas. With a little work on the food editor front, a possible complementary meal review will appear in January. With 4000 advance reservations made on the first morning phone lines were open (1st December) though, the chance of it becoming reality are next to nothing.

Mince pies

225g cold butter, diced
350g plain flour
100g golden caster sugar
280g mincemeat
1 small egg, beaten
icing sugar, to dust

To make the pastry, rub the butter into the flour, then mix in the sugar and a pinch of salt. Combine the pastry into a ball - don't add liquid - and knead it briefly. The dough will be fairly firm, like shortbread dough. You can use the dough immediately, or chill.

Preheat the oven to 200C/gas 6/fan 180C. Line 18 holes of two 12-hole patty tins, by pressing small walnut-sized balls of pastry into each hole. Spoon the mincemeat into the pies.

Take slightly smaller balls of pastry than before and pat them out to make round lids, big enough to cover the pies. Top the pies with their lids, pressing the edges gently together to seal - you don't need to seal them with milk or egg.

Brush the tops of the pies with the beaten egg. Bake for 20 minutes until golden. Leave to cool in the tin for 5 minutes, then remove. Lightly dust with icing sugar and serve! MERRY CRIMBO!

Brasa: a place your date will get a good grilling

Lucie Jichova reviews Broadway Bar and Grill's lil bro

Lucie Jichova



Brasa was rather quiet on the Friday night when we visited, but we're here to spread the word!

This week, Felix returns to Fulham to review Brasa, the restaurant attached to the recently opened Broadway Bar & Grill which we wrote about a few weeks ago.

Since our last visit, Brasa has acquired its own sign above the door, sending out the "Hello we exist!" message to passers-by, although the word probably hasn't spread much yet: it was rather quiet on a Friday night when we visited.

Brasa promises a Mediterranean-style sharing experience centered around quality meat (sourced from the UK) which is cooked on an Asador grill imported from the Basque country. If steaks are too boring for your palate, there are specialties such as partridge, pheasant, venison or halibut. Brasa sounds like the perfect place for successful and beautiful young people (like yourself) to catch up on protein and chat with equally successful and beautiful friends. You will be served by friendly and beautiful staff, of course.

Skipping starters, we went straight to the point: meat. My friend Bea ordered a veal chop, and as all the meats at Brasa come pre-cut for sharing, I helped myself to a nice juicy piece. My only criticism about the veal was that it probably came a bit too cooked, considering that my friend asked for it to be rare-ish. My own Galloway fillet was a quality piece of rare-ish fresh meat, but when it's good meat like this, you can't go wrong with that. But, excuse my stickler tendencies, I did have beef with it. Firstly, it came with a bone. I was puzzled. Is

"I'll just eat butter, write for Felix and die fat, but hey, that's life."

this new? I don't know about you, but in my little head, fillet stands for boneless. I even called on the dictionary, just so I wouldn't make a fool of myself, and, indeed, it confirms that fillet stands for "a boneless cut or slice of meat or fish". Secondly, there just wasn't enough of that cow on my plate to justify the price tag. This is, after all, Fulham, not Knightsbridge. With these sort of GPS coordinates, one would think that £28 for the meat alone (not including sides) would warrant a Nice Big Piece of Cow. Or maybe it was just too good and I wanted more!

Our meats both came with a dollop of butter on the side, which is not what you usually see with your steak, but I'm with Julie Powell on this one: "Is there anything better than butter? The day there is a meteorite rushing toward Earth and we have thirty days to live, I am going to spend it eating butter." (In case you forgot, she's that woman who blogged about her year-long cooking from the Julia Child cookbook; her blog turned into a book, which turned into a movie and now she's famous and rich. Whereas I'll just eat butter, write for Felix and die fat, but hey, that's life.) To balance out the butter-beef cardio combo, we did nominally order salad: grilled fennel - delicious - and

tossed green vegetables: green beans, snow peas and brocolli. It was, err ... very green?

For afters, we picked a dessert with possibly the longest name ever: "Cardamom Poached Pumpkin with Smoked Chestnuts, Chocolate Ice Cream and Candid Clementines". Food writers who get paid by the word will love this one. It worked for me, as I'm a big fan of spices in desserts. The pumpkin was thinly sliced and arranged into a rose, while the rest of the dessert was scattered around on a black board in that modern obsession-with-presentation style. And just because we're greedy, we also indulged on the Baked Chocolate Tart with Blackberry Sorbet, which was sweet, warm, melting, flowing, head-spinning ... excuse me, I forgot I was writing about food. Also, I was on my second glass of Pinot Grigio by then.

Some of the other dessert choices on the menu are odd; I know this is London and people have weird tastes, but who orders rice pudding after a steak? More interesting is the Grilled Banana Split with Hackney Honey. Hackney isn't known for bees peacefully flying over meadows, but among all that council-estate deprivation, there is a teenager called Philip Schilds who keeps bees on his rooftop and sells his honey at markets. Locally sourced ingredients are all the rage now, so well done Brasa!

Brasa 474-476 Fulham Rd, London SW6 1BY. 020 7610 3137 Nearest tube: Fulham Broadway

Shakin' your cocktail feather

Letting your hair down, sippin' on cocktails by Peter Quicke and Jamie Rickman

As the cold and dark winter draws swiftly around us there is but one thing to warm the cockles on a dreary evening. Cocktails, the perfect pick-me-up for pre or post-prandial pleasure. Imperial students, you're now in the nexus of the UK's cocktail scene, just down the road from the Savoy hotel where 'The Savoy Cocktail Book' was first compiled in 1930. If you're sitting on a trust fund from Daddy that could have bailed out Iceland, then this is the place to be. However if like us your recession-frayed purse strings are tightening slowly around your neck, read on to enjoy cocktails on the cheap.

The cocktail is reputed to have been invented in New Orleans in 1794 by Antoine Peychaud, a pharmacist by trade, as a tonic for his customers. The word is derived from "coquetier", the French for egg cup, which is the means still used to measure cocktail ingredients. History shows us mixology has its roots in science and should therefore come naturally to us Imperial students (with the obvious exception of geologists who can't even mix a snakebite). The temperature of your spirit is key to the quintessential cocktail. Gin, vodka and rum is served ice cold as the chill reduces tongue sensitivity to sweet and sourness and enhances dryness, whereas good whisky must be served at room temperature to allow the complex aromatics to evaporate and diffuse through the palate.

So now we have whetted your appetite, where are you going to go? Luckily we've done all the hard work for you and have paid the price in cirrhosis and hangovers. **The Loft** in Clapham, an exclusive upstairs urban retreat sells dribblingly good cocktails and has regular two for one nights with fantastic views of the kebab shop across the road, which will deep fry anything if you ask nicely.

If you're in the mood for Fulham, try **Chateau 6** for a classier/slozier kind of night. Just lay back on the faux-leather Chesterfields while being regaled with stories of Mr Abercrombie's gap yah. Our personal favourite, **Anam Bar** in Angel, is a little bit further afield but well worth the extra time. Tucked away down Chapel market, this chilled out unpretentious venue does the tastiest cocktails we've tried so far. We highly recommend the outrageously quaffable 'Dr Strangelove' a smooth mix of Buffalo Trace Bourbon with Port, Saké and Tucca, tickled with caramel. Also topping our list is the Chilli 'n' Chocolate, red chilli muddled and shaken with Tequila, coffee and butterscotch liqueurs and cocoa powder. Head down on a Thursday and get any cocktail for four pounds.

As the Imperial bible *New Scientist* rightly said "Humankind has gone to almost absurd lengths to make ethanol palatable" but we've gone one step further and made them cheap as well. In the 1790s happy hour began at 3pm so let's raise our glasses to Peychaud and have a little pick-me-up before final lectures.

The Manhattan

Reputed to have been invented by Winston Churchill's mother:

2 oz rye whiskey
1/2 oz sweet vermouth
2-3 dashes Angostura bitters
1 maraschino cherry to garnish

- Pour the ingredients into a mixing glass with ice cubes.
- Stir well.
- Strain into a cocktail glass.



A few too many cocktails leads to naked men and digging massive holes

Cocktails etc.

In addition to Peter and Jamie's recommendations, here are my alternative locations for awesome cocktails and the recipe for a good night.

Bar Kick

127 Shoreditch High St,
London E1 6JE

Happened to come across this place on a Friday night; you can expect Mojitos stinking of rum, challenges to table football (which, when you lose, means that both your money and reputation is down the drain). Prices are comparable to the West End, but the East End is really where it's at.

The Book Club

100 Leonard Street EC2A 4RH

Another one of the East End places-to-be, reviewed countless in Felix. Good gigs, ping pong and good alcohol, need I say more?

Graphic Bar

4 Golden Square,
London W1F 9HT

Serving cocktails in paint pots, there's no need for the pretentious little finger in the air and grubby fingerprints over the glass. Served according to the colour of gin, share paint buckets for four, but at £25 a pop.

NO MISSILES AT ASSA

An all authentic Korean food experience.

By Chinhua Yap

Assa is a humble little establishment in the Little Korea of Soho, a short stretch of shops with a conspicuously significant numbers of Korean eateries. The best sign of culinary authenticity is the presence of actual Koreans in a Korean restaurant and on this front Assa did

amazingly well. The place was bustling with Koreans and it was reassuring to see them tucking into bubbling pots of *kimchi* stews and hearing the sounds of the *dolsot bibimbap* sizzling away. Seriously though, do you see the Japanese in Yo-Sushi, or Italians in Pizza Hut?

The concept is easy, get to Assa, pray that it is not packed to the doors and

hopefully, grab a table. Sit down and have your legs awkwardly positioned — touching the legs of your dining mates. The things we go through for food...

Assa offers great lunch deals. For about £6, you get a main dish and two saucers of *banchan* (side dishes) with a rice tea to wash everything down with.

I was immediately drawn to the *dolsot bibimbap* upon scanning the menu though; the theatrics of a heated stone pot was good enough impetus. Unglamorously translated into "rice with various sautéed or raw vegetables topped with an egg (raw, or fried) seasoned with Korean fermented red pepper paste served in a stone pot". Quite a mouth-

ful. Squirt in appropriate amounts of slightly spicy pepper paste, burst the beautiful egg yolk and stir it all up. Attempt to coat every grain of rice and every bit of vegetables with the yolk and the pepper paste and enjoy the delightful contrast in flavours and textures. The crunchy vegetable strands and the fluffy grains of white rice all brought together by the more-ish and umami-rich ember red pepper paste. Those with a slightly heartier appetite should consider various stir-fried beef or chicken entrées served on top of a generous portion of rice — less ostentatious but still delicious.

What stole the show was the *Haemul Pajeon* (Korean style seafood pancake).

An omelette packed with prawns and squids. The batter was pan-fried to a golden glorious crisp and the soy and rice vinegar dipping sauce served as a nice little embellishment. Don't wait, though, devour the pancake asap as the crisp doesn't last long.

Assa was equal parts sound, sight and taste. The crackle of the stone pot, the simmering of the fiercely red stews and the genuine tastes left us with a terrific experience. Travel around the world, my friends, with a culinary exploration.

Assa 53 St Giles High St, Charing Cross, London WC2H 8LH 020 7240 8256.

TRAVEL

Travel Editor: **Dylan Lowe**
Chris Richardson

travel.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Wishing You Were Here



Dutch graffiti by Dylan Lowe

Want to see your travel photograph featured here? Send it to travel.felix@imperial.ac.uk.

Travel Blog of the Week



Who: Gap-yearer Amar Hussain runs **Gap Year Escape**, a website that documents his pursuit – the dream of perpetual travel.

About: Management consultant-cum freelance writer, Amar defines Gap Year Escape – a one-man chronicle of his leap-of-faith and voyage around the globe. As he rhetorically states: “how can you know your place in the world if you haven’t seen it?”

Why: Guided by his training in marketing and management, little wonder that Amar created his site from scratch and transformed it into one of the most well-respected travel blogs within the community. An experienced traveller, having recently returned from his round-the-world travel, his site offers sound advice that I can only deem invaluable. Destination-specific guides, tips on packing, personal ramblings are also features of this website.

Recommended: Three ways to travel to your dream destination; A beginner’s guide to travelling the Middle East; Travel advice in three words; 25 travel blogs you should know about.

Link: <http://www.gapyearesscape.com>

Twitter: @GapYearEscape

Have a story on how travel generated new friendships? Have hilarious travel tales to tell? Send us a tweet with the hashtag #FelixTravel

Small world, huh?

Travellers have a higher chance of getting laid, but more often rendered heartbroken – discuss. **By Dylan Lowe**

Nestled on the stool, the silhouette was none other than what obstructed me as I wrestled, pints in both grasps, my way to the booth where my friends were seated. I bellowed a ‘scuse-me – my voice drowned out amid patrons of the busy Queenstown bar – and attracted his attention. Hysteria, on both our parts, ensued and overwhelmed the venue.

I had run into none other than Luke Turner, Felix’s very own music editor, in the middle of New Zealand.

Just as the exhilaration settled and dampened, it was then the mysterious fabrication of fate that struck us hard. Sure enough, it was no serendipitous, random encounter that dumbfounded us both – the friend I had come visit was undertaking a ski instructor course, and one of her fellow attendees happened to be a friend of Luke’s.

Thus be the phrase ‘sheer coincidence’ condemned to becoming an eternal understatement.

Ever since bitten by the travel bug such ‘coincidences’ have tiptoed into my rucksack, sprouted exponentially and now parasitically attach itself to my traveller’s lifestyle – no more evident than the sighting of uncanny, seemingly-unconnected Facebook mutual friends.

Quoting Facebook may sound like a crude analogy, though exclaiming upon realising your childhood friend is in a relationship with a travel companion you’ve met in Fiji, or stumbling into someone at a bar in Prague who knows members of your extended family, is no social-media trickery.

As travelling becomes increasingly accessible – with more people exploiting such accessibility – is the world becoming smaller?

Travelling – combined, arguably, with social media – exposes the traveller to innumerable social opportunities the older generations could never have bargained for. Especially when modern technology, the said social media, allows us to maintain acquaintances we’ve made on the road.

But is getting acquainted with heaps of individuals overwhelmingly a good thing?

Not when emotions spiral out of control. In particular for the long-term, perpetual traveller, whose lifestyle and philosophy stand antagonistically against the concept of ‘remaining stationary’, any desire to cement a friendship is what the determined traveller must suppress.

“Travel can subtract distances as easily as it can lengthen them, plus a couple of complimentary barriers and brick walls”



Marriage, kids, mortgage, confinement, care home, death – better carpe diem bitches

Likewise, when travellers are embroiled in intimacy and mutual affection, travel can tear lovers apart in the cruellest of fashions.

Rather tragic, this irony is: that travel can subtract distances as easily as it can lengthen them, plus a couple of complimentary barriers and brick walls.

Though, is saving yourself from heartbreak or two justification enough for you to shun and elude from travel? Hardly.

The fact is that travelling is, inevitably, interwoven with our lives whether we like it or not. Remove the glamour and principle of exploration – what becomes clear is how travel is fundamentally a lifestyle we are all obliged to obey.

From the laborious extraction of oneself from bed to lecture hall, from the Odyssey-style voyage that has you traversing countries and continents to visit family and friends, the sort of travel I’m urging you to consider is that of necessity.

Not to mention other travellers headed in your direction. Unless one is so blinded by reckless fondness, like yours truly, one wouldn’t proceed to committing to a relationship with, say, an Australian girl who, to her dismay, was homebound mere weeks after the spark ignited.

Yet, what is there to despair and regret? When life is fleeting and encounters briefer

“As travelling becomes increasingly accessible – with more people exploiting such accessibility – is the world becoming smaller?”

still, shouldn’t we treasure the moments have-been rather than fret about their non-existence? Travel may strip you bare, it is still your facilitator of miraculous occurrences. Grievous partings may be, avoiding them by leading a mundane subsistence is, in my humble opinion, no more bearable.

Besides, what negative emotions travel inflicts upon you, it compensates and remedies with new amities, with your appetite for thrill and unpredictability quenched. We are – if I may speak on behalf of you all – addicts of surprises after all.

So in the words of Homer Simpson, albeit with a significant alteration, I would like to propose a toast: to travel, the problem of – and solution to – all of life’s problems.



They only come free with purchase of a travel package – real-time travel, not on WoW

TRAVEL

Christmas holiday in the sun

Why not trade in the dreary snow and endless movie re-runs this Christmas for some tasty tropical islands and unforgettable adventures? **By Chris Richardson**

You may recall from issues-past a tale of spiked drinks that occurred on Koh Phi Phi in Thailand, but last time I didn't really dwell on it as a place. It's a truly unmissable spot that offers beautiful sands and world class diving as well as a whole heap of other activities. Up until the devastating tsunami of 2004 Phi Phi was a haven, for backpackers and tourists alike, as the perfect Christmas resting spot, and thankfully people are starting to revisit the area over the holiday season. While the natural disaster obliterated the landscape and cost the lives of many, it allowed for a tasteful fresh start for an island that was well on the way of being permanently tarnished by reckless tourism.

Whilst certainly a cliché (I'm sure things are a cliché for a good reason, mind) Alex Garland's *The Beach* is truly a masterpiece appreciated by travellers the world over. While the mythical island is located on Thailand's Eastern Gulf, the glossy Hollywood screen adaptation was in fact filmed on Phi Phi over on the West coast. One frankly fantastic company (Spider Monkey Travel – look them up if you go) currently offer a camping trip to Phi Phi Leh, the smaller undeveloped Phi Phi island, where *The Beach* was filmed. I stumbled upon this while asking some backpackers for recommendations: it shot its way into my top three experiences in Southeast Asia and I've been recommending it ever since.

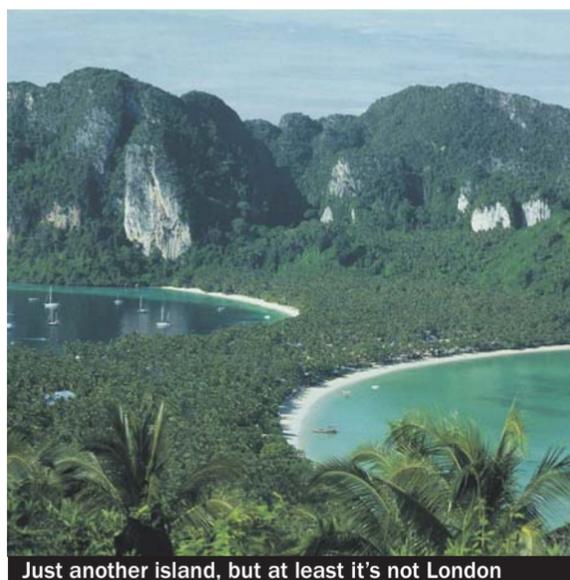
The camping trip kicked off with an optional thrill-seeking afternoon, starting with cliff jumping. The islands are composed of gargantuan limestone cliffs, there for your climbing pleasure. Following some probably-dangerous climbing you can then plunge into the turquoise ocean below, to be nibbled by fish and stung by the jellyfish waiting to greet you. The adrenaline from throwing yourself from over twenty metres is quite something (though the painful bum left me suffering for some time afterwards).

Next came the shark snorkelling, which is a lot less daunting than it sounds: the area is home to some harmless reef sharks as well as a plethora of corals and species of fish that'll keep you well entertained for days. Following a light lunch we were all exhausted but so excited to stand in awe at one of the most beautiful spots in the world, Maya Bay.

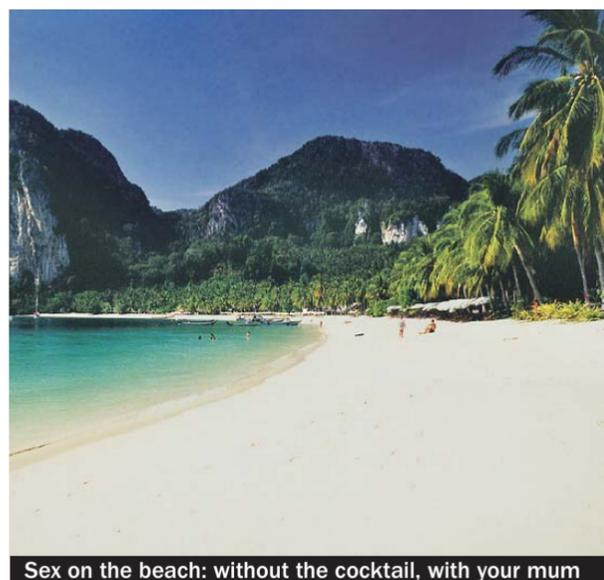
After a short swim to the island that involved huge waves slamming us into rocks and people losing shoes, we clam-



This exact photo with varying ugly faces gets taken every day – get some fucking originality



Just another island, but at least it's not London



Sex on the beach: without the cocktail, with your mum

bered our way through the jungle in haste. As my girlfriend had come out to join me I was set on this being a relaxed part of my trip, a break from the sweating and trekking, and we couldn't have picked a better place. Perfect white sand, turquoise waters and sunny blue skies: paradise.

I'd strongly advise against visiting during the day, as to do so would do the place no justice whatsoever. As we showed up later in the afternoon, hundreds of tourists were being booted off – and I mean hundreds. Thankfully strict policies mean that said tourists didn't leave any litter behind, and we had a flawless island for just a handful of us for an entire evening. It'd be upsetting to have to share it with the speedos and sexpats instead of just a few soon-to-be

close friends.

I think a lot of the time, the travelling experiences you recall with the greatest

“It shot its way into my top three experiences in Southeast Asia and I've been recommending it ever since”

fondness are heavily dependent on the company kept. Hannah and I met some really great people that night, including

we didn't really need anything but good company (if that). I really envy the Thai guys there, who definitely have one of the greatest jobs ever. I'd quite happily be paid to improve my fire stick skills, play some acoustic guitar and get drunk with travellers in such an awesome spot: remind me why I'm doing a degree? The good times continued well into the night before we retired on bamboo mats on the beach after tiring ourselves out from karaoke and catching crabs. Waking up in such an environment was quite something. As the tourists arrived we packed up camp and headed back to Phi Phi Don.

For some reason we decided that one night we'd abandon our perfectly adequate room for a bamboo shack on the other (party) side of the island, not then equating the excessive noise and thin walls to the lack of sleep that obviously followed. Several times I almost dozed off, only to be rudely kept awake by the likes of the Black Eyed Peas. I walked right past a shoe shop, smiling at the shoemaker on my merry way, only to find that the pharmacy was empty. Seconds later the shoe man popped up behind the counter as he buttoned up his slick lab coat. The Thais truly are a multitasking people: perhaps we could learn a thing or two. Taking full advantage of Thailand's liberal over-the-counter policy I invested in some 10p diazepam pills, popped a few, and within thirty minutes was out like a light without any problems.

Before getting my drink spiked (see felixonline.co.uk) the days that preceded with newly found friends were great fun. The island has the usual funky markets with all sorts of cool crafts, great quality street food at low prices, and the sights atop the viewpoint are incredible and well worth the climb. The island also has a fruit shake vendor (who I now have on Facebook – praise be Zuckerberg) that I'd rate over any other on the continent. Hilarity can be found every evening at the Reggae Bar, where anybody inebriated enough can enter the ring and give Muay Thai a go: I decided that I'd give it a miss since I'm more of a lover (read: pussy).

I don't really get all of the hype surrounding white Christmases: for those who stick around in England it's just guaranteed disappointment, and unless you're going to ski abroad what's the point in being confined to the dim-lit coldness? I for one would much rather be in a place like Phi Phi, enjoying the glistening heat with a frosty beer and book in hand and not a care in the world.

someone from a familiar remote village back home. As always the circumstances lead to fast-paced friendship forming which made the evening so much more fun.

We had a barbecue, sat and drank beers and talked, before the evening picked up and turned into more of a party with fire tricks and great music on the agenda. A definite highlight was the obligatory skinny dip in the phosphorescent water: hardly as magical as DiCaprio's moment, what with the Scotsmen belting “this is Sparta!” at the top of their lungs. Anyway, the partying was great fun, and the lack of a resident law enforcement was certainly taken advantage of.

Sometimes you need activities to keep you entertained, but the atmosphere of this place spoke for itself, and

It's never too late to start contributing to Felix

But I wouldn't hang about...

There are just 17 issues left this academic year

So in a way, eventually it will be too late...
Erm, scratch that first sentence then.

17



Contributors are welcome in all sections. Email the section directly or alternatively email the Editor at felix@imperial.ac.uk

An explosive end to 2010

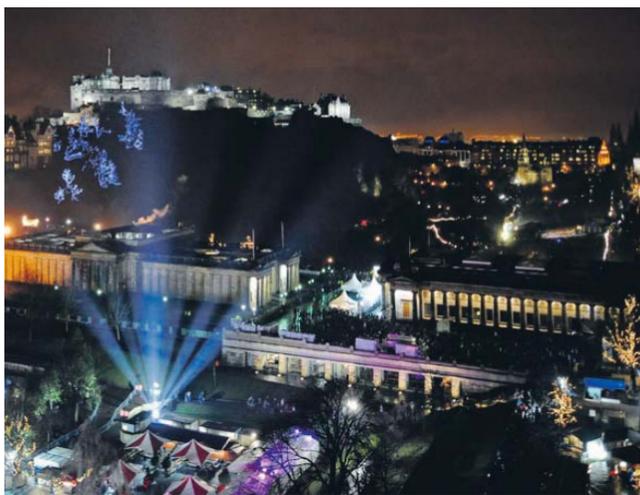
What are the best places in Europe to bid farewell to the year in style? Presenting the most spectacular locations for New Year's Eve celebrations

Copenhagen, Denmark



The alcoholic younger sister of the Scandinavian nations, there's no escape from entering the New Year without at least a mild attempt at intoxication. For the connoisseurs Copenhagen's latest status as one of world's most renowned destination of Michelin-starred dining will no doubt lure in the hungry pack. For the more animalistic party-goers I recommend the Cirkusbygningen, the old circus building set to host the largest single party in town. The best fireworks will hover over the beautiful Tivoli Gardens for five nights in a row prior to New Year's Eve.

Edinburgh, Scotland



Edinburgh's Hogmanay – is there a better way to spend New Year's Eve than this? One of the UK's best festivals takes place in the heart of Edinburgh. Opening this year's event is the torchlight procession, before the celebrants toss away their candles and burst into party mode in the City Centre at the official Street Party. Elsewhere, West Princes Street Gardens play host to concerts featuring some of the hippest artists on the UK music scene. All to be wrapped up by breathtaking fireworks, holding hands with your beloved and 'Auld Lang Syne'.

Antwerp, Belgium



The gorgeous Belgian city is by no means medieval when it comes down to New Year's Eve celebrations. Against the archaically-architectural backdrop, some of the coolest rave fests in Belgium take place in Antwerp; for the little-more civilised bunch the sheer thought of Belgian beer should entice you to visit a few pubs and keep your pint-count high. Come minutes before midnight and follow the trail of celebrants down to the quays of the river Scheldt – be in awe of the explosions of fireworks. Polish it off with your first beer/champagne in 2011.

Prague, Czech Republic



The Czechs have an extra reason to celebrate 1 January than you think: the Czech Republic was established on this day in 1993 following the breakup of Czechoslovakia. Not one but several public firework displays erupt at midnight. The popular methods of celebration include a bar crawl and fine dining at all-inclusive restaurants offering food, drinks and dancing. And then there's the Party Boat, which cruises along the river Vltava – sightseeing aside, the itinerary is timed with precision to allow patrons the opportunity to catch the fireworks at a prime location.

Hamburg, Germany



The marvellous, yet seemingly-reserved city reveals its true, fun-seeking nature on New Year's Eve. Whilst Altona accommodates for the older audience that seek a quieter and more mature celebration, energy and vigour is what keep other districts' flow running – areas around Reeperbahn and Schanzenviertel bring out the party spirit and celebratory booze-age. The fireworks at the Elbe is a spectacle, though it's the streets where the displays are at – fireworks are available for purchase in supermarkets. Load your trolleys with gunpowder and ignite some rockets in your neighbourhood.

Reykjavik, Iceland



You may strip away the Icelanders' finance but you still won't dampen their party spirits – and it shines through during those long dark nights of theirs. Their New Year's Eve celebrations seem to occur in reverse: the evening itself is revered in solemnity before the fireworks, best viewed from the highest spot of the city, Hallgrímskirkja, announce the commencing of New Year festivity. Parties unveil on every street and live music emanates from every bar until as late as 5am. And there's no stopping you from prolonging the famed party spirit well into the first day of 2011.

HANGMAN



hangman.felix@imperial.ac.uk

Twatter



SexyOsama69

Srsly guys. Wtf is this wikileaks stuff all about?



Barack_attack_I33thaxor

Still not really sure.



Cameron_DA_Maneron!!!

Something to do with cables



SexyOsama69

Like electricity cables for like electric shit?



Barack_attack_I33thaxor

Yeah thats wot hillary told me



Cameron_DA_Maneron!!!

same. Lost some cables I think



SUPERACEGORTHEROAR87

yeah. Think Gaddafi lost some cables



The_Cleggomatortrontown <3

Alright, I can't tell if you guys are messing around. You're messing around, right?



Barack_attack_I33thaxor

.....no?



Gadaffi_the_grey

Can't cum on xbox tonight guys. Lost my ethernet cable. FFS!!

DRUNKEN MATE OF THE WEEK
Merry Christmas. Don't forget to send your photos to felix@imperial.ac.uk

Plants? They're a fairytale!

Don't be silly, plants don't exist! Now go back to sleep...

The Pirate Fish

(Ed - Who the fuck?)

In a radical step, Imperial College has broken away from the scientific community to declare that plants are actually a figment of the imagination. When questioned about the fact that there were quite obviously a lot of green things about the place, a spokesperson for the college said that they were mainly "Empty cans of beer, rotten food and Waitrose shopping bags".

Imperial went on to say that since plants don't exist it would be silly to retain any of its plant sciences staff and have sent them a text message telling them to have their desks cleared out by the end of the academic year. "We would have spoken to them personally but didn't want to catch their plant believing madness" said College; it went on to say that "affected PhD students would receive a £5 book token and be sent on their way unless an exorcism could be performed to relieve them of their planty-osity".

When it was pointed out that this move would leave a rather large gap in the teaching timetable, College replied that it would "Give students time to learn about green things that were real like frogs and global warming. And besides, this isn't primary school - you're supposed to be teaching yourselves by now - what do

Do you know what definitely does exist? Poon-tang... What? Just sayin'...

*whistles, man it's a long way down isn't it?



WAKE UP PEOPLE! NONE OF THIS REAL! YOU'RE BEING TRICKED! IT'S THE REPTILIANS IN CAHOOTS WITH THE MOLE PEOPLE!

you think Wikipedia is for?". College had no comment when asked how they expected remaining staff to maintain their high standards of teaching once their workload had doubled other than to suggest that maybe students could mark each other's exam scripts.

At a staff student meeting one student asked "If plants don't exist then why does college pay thousands of pounds a year to replace the grass on the Queen's Lawn before killing it again by putting a marquee over it?" The reply was "Don't be daft, of course grass exists - it's a symbiosis between a fungus and a photosynthetic bacterium. Did you pay no attention in the first year? This is exactly why we're not going to bother teaching you lot anymore." Felix found this student in the Union later rocking backwards and forwards muttering the word "lichens" over and over.

In an effort to prove to College that plants do in fact exist, students have been placing shrubs, flowers and the occasional root vegetable outside the faculty building. When we asked a passing staff member to comment on the protest she

"Since plants don't exist it would be silly to retain any of its plant sciences staff"

said "It's nice to see a bit of green around here, it gets a bit depressing sitting in a blue cube all day. How much are the turnips?"

After talks as to whether those undergraduates registered on the Plant Biology degree should be sectioned under the mental health act or would be able to continue their studies, College was happy to announce that the degree would continue under the new title of "Green Things". The biology department has said that it is pleased to offer new final year courses that will fulfill the "Green Things" degree requirement including "What is that nasty stuff under the drawer in my fridge?", "Eating that was a bad idea, wasn't it?" and "How to find a John Lewis".

Letters

Dear Sirs, I have noticed a startling resemblance between our Head of Life Sciences Ian Owens and the Radio 1 DJ Chris Moyles.

Yours Truly,
David "Radio 4, 4eva" Stumpling



Ian Owens Chris Moyles

Dear Sirs, I have noticed that you have stolen a type of joke, unashamedly I might add, from the illustrious pages of the Private Eye magazine. I am extremely disappointed and I will be ceasing my subscription to Hangman immediately.

Yours Sincerely,
Leroy Sinclair-Muffintits

You followed that arrow didn't you? Fucking sheeple...

THE NEWS WITHOUT THE NEWS



“WIKILEAKS HACKER TRACED TO GAZA STRIP”

DRUNKEN MATE OF THE WEEK



YES O.K. This is a picture of Kim Guan Yeap about to kiss some guy's ass. If you people stopped sending me pictures of ass then I wouldn't have to print thousands of copies of it!!!

Horoscopes

Aries

Your department is running a secret santa. You are so very excited, until you realise that your subject has been cut. Not only is your degree shit, now you won't even receive a crap present you don't want off of someone you don't even like.

Taurus

You are a hard to catch pokémon. You laugh at me from the long grass. I throw a rock at you. You look angry. Oh god! Can I begin to hope? I throw a ball at you. bounce bounce... OH SHOOT! IT WAS SO CLOSE, TOO! ARGGGHHHH!

Gemini

You pick up a copy of I, Science. What the hell is this? Punctuation in titles went out of fashion with Panic! At The Disco, what are they playing at? Outraged, you hurl it to the ground. You get an on-the spot fine for littering, twat.

Cancer

After Christmas dinner you combine boardgames, namely Game of Life and Monopoly. You go to uni. The rent is £9,000 a year. You throw a fire-extinguisher off the roof of Millbank tower. Go to jail. Go directly to jail. Do not pass go. Do not collect £200.

Leo

You listen to a friend talking in Portuguese. It's kinda hot. Unfortunately he starts talking about dick-shit (apparently it's when shit comes out of your dick after "riding the bakerloo line") and you are now confused by your arousal. He goes to the toilet. You slyly follow him.

Virgo

The authorities in Sweden are all over your case for some reason. It's something to do with you standing on the houses of parliament shouting BORK BORK BORK, but you're convinced that it's a US conspiracy against you.

Libra

It's Christmas so you decide to buy a beautiful Christmas tree. You order it online, but someone nicks it from outside your house to lay it in front of the university faculty building. Plant Sciences are history, and your lovely tree is no more. Happy sodding Christmas.

Scorpio

You grow a third nipple overnight. Your doctor can't explain it, and it keeps growing. Soon it is so large that it resembles a breast. men start paying more attention to you and you finally feel valued as a person. It explodes in a violent, pus-filled tsunami of pain. Lolpwn3d.

Sagittarius

You bitch about someone to a friend. The next day, the transcript of your bitchiness is published on Wikileaks. Now everyone in the world knows how much of a douche you are. 4chan users hack your bank account and spend all your money on lube and crackers.

Capricorn

You go to a Christmas dinner you believed was fancy dress. It wasn't. Everyone laughs at you, but you make a wonderful turkey. You wake up halfway inside an oven, dripping with gravy. Someone is coming at you with a baster- noooOOOOO!

Aquarius

You attend the Musical about Imperial college. Inspired, you spend the rest of the week only talking in verse. Unfortunately this affects your acquisition of knowledge, and makes your friends and lecturers think you're perverse.

Pisces

While standing outside the East basement window, you notice a whole room of people playing Yu-Gi-Oh. Delighted you go home, get your Bakura cosplay outfit and head back. Turns out you imagined them, and cheese society are very confused.

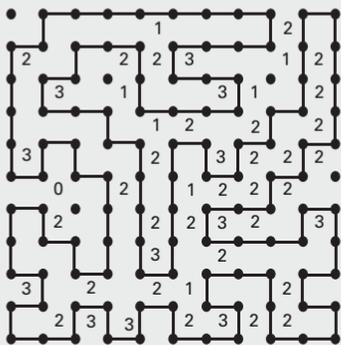
Puzzles Editors: **Polly Bennett**
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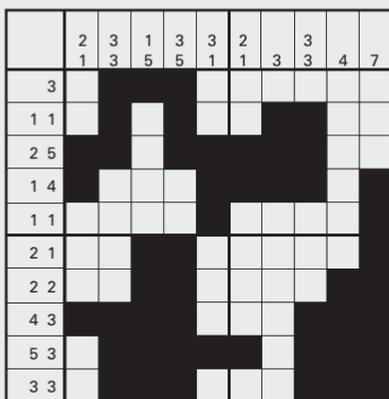
PUZZLES

Last Week's Solutions

Slitherlink

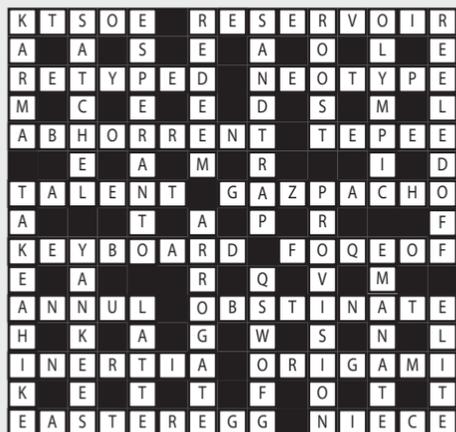


Nonogram



Crossword

17ac was "KEYBOARD". Using the qwerty setup, encode A as Q, B as W etc. to get the three clues RAPID, NIACIN and ALBINO



Cryptic solutions - Across 1. ANAEROBE 5. BATMAN 10. DEGREE OF FREEDOM 11. BASKET CASE 13. GLAD 15. EIDETIC 17. ANAEMIC 18. HOEDOWN 19. ERITREA 21. RIFT 22. PENCIL THIN 25. LOCH NESS MONSTER 27. SYSTEM 28. BAD APPLE Down 1. AUDIBLE 2. ARG 3. RE-ELECTION 4. BRONC 6. APEX 7. MIDDLEMARCH 8. NOMADIC 9. OFFSTAGE 12. SIDE EFFECTS 14. MARIO LANZA 16. CONDENSE 18. HERALDS 20. AINTREE

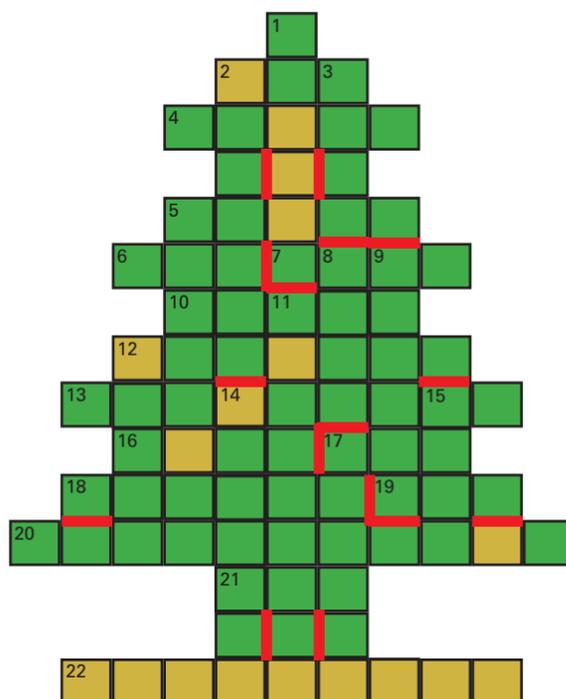
Going Underground

F	A	I	R	L	O	P
6	1	9	18	12	15	16
P	I	M	L	I	C	O
16	9	13	12	9	3	15

Crossword

Theme: *My Beautiful Christmas Tree*

My Christmas tree is stylishly decorated with red and gold, but it looks a bit bare without some clue answers, don't you agree? Red tinsel indicates clue ends, gold baubles spell out something that may be found in this tree at this time of year from top to bottom, which can be written at 22 across. Merry Christmas to you all from the puzzles team!



Across

- Fluid inflammation product (3)
- Small, crude shelter (5)
- Extreme (5)
- Mineral containing valuable metal (3)
- Island containing Honolulu (4)
- Triangular wall portion between roof edges (5)
- Amusing (7)
- Psychological battles (4,5)
- Vintage (4)
- Understand (3)
- Perfect society (6)
- Humorously sarcastic (3)
- One skilled with an instrument (5,6)
- Place of relaxation and therapy (3)
- Could be found here at Christmas (9)

Down

- Size of a book made from two folds (6)
- Verne's travelling hero (7)
- Scratch (4)
- Encouraging (6,2)
- Scottish Gaelic name for Scotland (4)
- Steered ship (6)
- Found in Ursa Major (3,6)
- Lasso or lariat (5)
- Down payment (7)
- Strange and frightening (4)
- Dried, seasoned sausage (6)

Chess - White mate in 3

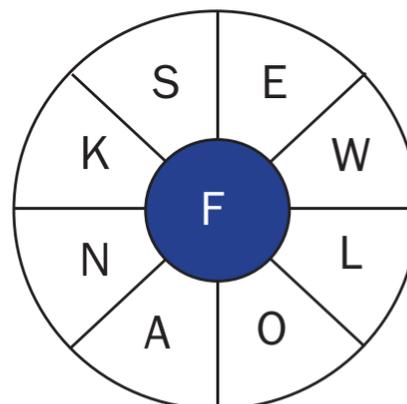


Scribble Space



Word Wheel

Make as many words of at least 4 letters as you can, always using the central one. **NO** plurals, conjugated verbs, comparatives or superlatives, because I said so.. There is always at least one 9 letter word.



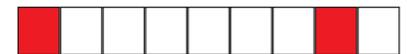
TARGET: 23

Pictogram

Dr. Seuss's character says "One man's toxic waste is another man's potpourri"



In 1847, Augst Immgard hung them from branches of a tree to celebrate Christmas



This has predominant flavours of ginger and tends to be made with honey or molasses



Semi-parasitic plant of the order Santalales used to celebrate a Scandanavian custom during Christmas



An assortment of fruits, leaves and various other materials formed into a ring



His last name has come into the English language as a general term for miserliness



Anagram the red letters...



SPORT

Felix Sports League



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Team	P	W	D	L	F	A	Diff	Index
1 Basketball M1	5	5	0	0	374	264	110	5.00
2 Table Tennis M2	5	5	0	0	77	8	69	5.00
3 Volleyball W1	4	4	0	0	8	0	8	5.00
4 Volleyball M1	3	3	0	0	6	0	6	5.00
5 Tennis W1	2	2	0	0	17	5	12	5.00
6 Lacrosse W1	1	1	0	0	19	2	17	5.00
7 Football M3	1	1	0	0	10	0	10	5.00
8 Table Tennis W1	1	1	0	0	5	0	5	5.00
9 Hockey W1	7	6	0	1	45	9	36	3.71
10 Tennis M1	8	6	1	1	60	36	24	3.50
11 Fencing M2	6	5	0	1	723	595	128	3.50
12 Table Tennis M1	6	5	0	1	70	32	38	3.50
13 Squash W1	6	5	0	1	18	5	13	3.50
14 Lacrosse M1	5	4	0	1	83	49	34	3.20
15 Netball W1	8	6	0	2	344	229	115	2.75
16 Rugby M1	7	5	0	2	153	124	29	2.43
17 Badminton M1	7	4	1	2	34	22	12	2.00
18 ICSM Hockey W3	6	4	0	2	262	163	99	2.00
19 Water Polo W1	1	0	1	0	4	4	0	2.00
20 Cricket M1	5	3	0	2	984	956	28	1.40
21 ICSM Hockey W1	5	3	0	2	21	13	8	1.40
22 ICSM Netball W3	5	3	0	2	131	124	7	1.40
23 ICSM Hockey M3	5	3	0	2	9	18	-9	1.40
24 Hockey M3	6	2	2	2	6	5	1	1.00
25 ICSM Football M1	5	2	1	2	18	13	5	0.80
26 ICSM Badminton W1	5	2	1	2	23	23	0	0.80
27 ICSM Badminton M1	5	2	1	2	16	24	-8	0.80
28 Fencing W2	7	3	1	3	20	13	7	0.71
29 ICSM Netball W1	6	3	0	3	210	199	11	0.50
30 Netball W2	6	3	0	3	234	245	-11	0.50
31 ICSM Rugby M3	4	2	0	2	84	143	-59	0.50
32 Basketball W1	2	1	0	1	55	47	8	0.50
33 Squash M4	2	1	0	1	3	3	0	0.50
34 Hockey M2	7	2	2	3	12	23	-11	0.29
35 Fencing M1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
36 Lacrosse W2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00
37 Badminton W1	7	3	0	4	20	36	-16	-0.14
38 ICSM Rugby M1	7	3	0	4	137	193	-56	-0.14
39 Netball W3	5	2	0	3	139	129	10	-0.40
40 Hockey M1	2	0	1	1	4	6	-2	-1.00
41 ICSM Football M2	3	1	0	2	8	13	-5	-1.00
42 Badminton M2	6	2	0	4	25	23	2	-1.00
43 Squash M3	6	2	0	4	10	18	-8	-1.00
44 ICSM Hockey M2	6	2	0	4	8	20	-12	-1.00
45 Fencing M3	6	2	0	4	653	708	-55	-1.00
46 Hockey W2	7	2	0	5	10	30	-20	-1.43
47 ICSM Hockey M1	4	1	0	3	6	6	0	-1.75
48 Rugby M2	8	2	0	6	136	208	-72	-1.75
49 Cricket M2	5	1	0	4	796	795	1	-2.20
50 Hockey M4	5	1	0	4	7	12	-5	-2.20
51 ICSM Hockey W2	5	1	0	4	11	23	-12	-2.20
52 Fencing W1	5	1	0	4	557	621	-64	-2.20
53 Rugby M3	5	1	0	4	44	148	-104	-2.20
54 ICSM Rugby M2	5	1	0	4	61	199	-138	-2.20
55 Rugby M4	5	1	0	4	46	197	-151	-2.20
56 Football M1	6	1	0	5	10	21	-11	-2.50
57 Squash M2	6	1	0	5	8	22	-14	-2.50
58 Tennis M2	3	0	0	2	0	22	-22	-2.67
59 Football W1	1	0	0	1	1	6	-5	-4.00
60 Water Polo M1	1	0	0	1	5	10	-5	-4.00
61 Football M2	3	0	0	3	5	14	-9	-4.00
62 ICSM Badminton M2	4	0	0	4	7	25	-18	-4.00
63 Squash M1	6	0	0	6	4	26	-22	-4.00
64 ICSM Netball W2	6	0	0	6	115	218	-103	-4.00

Dodgeball and Medsin team up for World Aids

90 keen dodgeballers, 15 teams, three balls, one winner

Alan Soltani

On Thursday 2nd December, Medsin Imperial and IC Dodgeball Club collaborated to organise the biggest charity Dodgeball tournament Imperial has ever seen with prizes including a £50 bar tab at B@1 for the winning team. Over £200 was raised and donated to World Aids Day to combat HIV/Aids.

The teams were split into four groups and with each group playing a round robin to determine the top two teams, who would then go through to the Quarter Finals. Each match consisted of three games, where each game lasted two minutes.

Group A saw Team Asian Domination truly live up to their name and come through first in their group, followed by Small Men in Big Black Ties. Group B was overrun by teams from student halls with The Wilsonites and Weeks & Garden coming out on top. Group C was nicknamed the Group of Death, containing Royal Hollowballs (Royal Holloway University Dodgeball Team) and IC Handball Club's team, La Grand Mouton. The handballers were quick to point out that, in their opinion, Dodgeball was merely Handball for "disabled" people. So much for political correctness! Both these teams comfortably qualified along with group D's Beach Wolverines and The Sabb Reapers, a team primarily made up of the Union Sabbaticals and including Union President, Alex Kendall.

The Quarter Finals were a tense affair with some brilliant Dodgeball on display. Weeks & Garden comfortably dispatched Asian Domination. They were efficiently organised and run by their team captain, Tom Peake, who implemented many advanced Dodgeball tactics he'd picked up playing for IC Dodgeball's first team only last week. The Sabb Reapers were knocked out by Royal Hollowballs in a thoroughly one-sided affair but not without its surprises with both Heather Jones and Naida Dzigal making kills to ensure they weren't whitewashed. The Wilsonites saw off Small Men in Big Black Ties by three games to nil. The Beach Wolverines ended Le Grand Mouton's run with a three nil win but not without plenty of bruises and one set of sore genitalia as the Handballers put their blistering ball throwing abilities to good use. They could not, however, come out on top against the Wolverines' organisation and experience.

In the Semi Finals, we enjoyed a thriller between Wilsonites and Weeks & Garden. Wilsonites, captained by Scott Esnouf, matched W&G's tactical awareness but went ahead due to some huge throwing and great counter-attacking play. W&G gave themselves hope by winning Game 2 and drawing Game 3 when the Wilsonites started to employ some very negative tactics; they threw only one of the two balls they had possession of for most of the game. But they went on to lose the next two games

“Remember the five rules of dodgeball: dodge, duck, dive, dip and dodge”

and go out, albeit with their dignity still very much intact. In the other semi, the Beach Wolverines came up against Royal Hollowballs. Cheered on by the Imperial crowd and captained by Benjamin Bell, the Wolverines put to use their good balance of consistent throwers and skilful catchers. The Hollowballs could not keep possession of any balls and were be-

ing picked off in the first two games. They then fought back and managed a draw and a win in the next two. Wolverines finished them off however, ending up with a 3-1 win. The Hollowballs went on to win to third place playoff comfortably over W&G.

The best-of-seven final was an exhilarating match to watch. The Wilsonites took the first game against a tiring and lacklustre Wolverines. This was perhaps partly due to Alan Soltani's idea to complete his costume by changing from his trainers into flip-flops, which happened to be somewhat impractical. Wolverines then regained their form and took the next 3 games albeit not without a fight. Wilsonites brought one back but the Wolverines went on to see them off 4-2 and win the tournament.

We'd like to thank everyone who helped organise the tournament and all those who entered. We believe it was a thorough success and both Medsin Imperial and the IC Dodgeball Club gained a great deal of exposure. We hope the money raised can make a difference somewhere.

Look out for another potential tournament next term in collaboration with RAG!

Equestrian team gallop to victory

Ilse Daly

Imperial's equestrian first team got the new season off to a cracking start by beating rivals Oxford, LSE and Brunel.

The first competition of the year, hosted by Brunel, saw plenty of friendly rivalry between the universities. The Dressage phase gave club Chair, Andre Wilmes, a chance to show his ability to ride even the most stubborn of horses, by scoring a personal best while others could hardly make it move. However, we won't mention his difficulty in remembering where he's supposed to go... Next up, team captain and committed show jumper Mikaela Bryant-Meisner had the misfortune of riding against Oxford's leading rider. However, true to form, she pulled off a very creditable round, only a few points behind Oxford girl. Ilse Daly's round went to plan with only a minor hiccup, to give the other teams plenty of penalty points. Newcomer Rachel was the last Imperial rider to go and did a superb job, especially considering the massive size of her horse.

After the Dressage rounds, Imperial trailed Oxford by only 2 points, and competitive spirit

was running high. Taking Imperial into the Showjumping phase, Mikaela was now in her element, performing a foot-perfect round on a difficult horse. Andre also rode a commendable clear round despite, or perhaps because of, having a bit of a crash in the warm-up, completely demolishing the jump. Dressage rider Ilse's least favourite round was not helped by her slightly hyperactive horse, who seemed to get more excited with every jump, but still managed to go clear. Rachel's horse had to be one of the laziest of all time. Last to go and with everything still to ride for, she rode a very respectable clear round in a record amount of time.

Feeling optimistic, but by no means certain, the Imperial team waited for the results with baited breath. However, they had nothing to worry about, beating Oxford with a 4 point margin, followed by Brunel and then LSE. The individual placings saw Andre come in 1st, Ilse 4th, Mikaela 6ths, with Rachel unfortunately just out of the placings.

Hopes are high for the next competition, to be held in February and will be hosted by Imperial.

SPORT

Formula 1: An alternative view to 'Pedal to the Vettel' from Joe Taylor



Having read the Formula 1 review in Issue 1474, I found several points I completely disagree with.

Firstly, team orders. I believe that Ferrari were completely correct to ask Massa to move over and allow Alonso through. At that point in the season, both drivers were a long way behind the Red Bulls and the McLarens, so focussing on the Alonso, the higher scoring and generally faster driver was the only sensible option. Although team orders are officially banned, this was a pointless knee-jerk reaction to Ferrari abusing them in Austria in 2002, where Michael Schumacher was miles ahead of anyone and there was no need to swap positions to gain him an extra 4 points for victory. Since the ban, there have been several times when team orders have been used and no one has battered an eyelid. For example, at the Chinese Grand Prix in 2008, Kimi Raikkonen allowed Felipe Massa pass him. No one made a fuss about this because it was the end of the season and the team were giving their lead driver the best possible chance of winning. No different to Germany this year then, except it occurred earlier in the season.

Team orders have always been a part of the sport. In fact, in 1956, Ferrari driver stopped to let his team mate Juan Manuel Fangio take over his car in order to win the championship despite the fact that Moss also had a chance to win. To put that in perspective, it would be like Sebastian Vettel letting Mark Webber take over his car in Abu Dhabi, had

Alonso got himself into a championship winning position. From the examples I have given, you might think that team orders are unfair as only Ferrari use them. Not true. For example, in 1998, David Coulthard was ordered to move over to allow Mika Hakkinen to win the Australian Grand Prix. Furthermore, in last week's Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, Mark Webber found it awfully easy to overtake fellow Red Bull family driver Jaime Alguersuari considering that Massa spent the entire rest of the race stuck behind him. So, to conclude, team orders have their place in Formula 1, can you confirm you understood that message?

Moving on, the new teams. Far from being 'unpleasant boils', I think they have done an excellent job this season and proved how tough Formula 1 is.

First of all, Lotus: They were only given the go ahead to enter in late September 2009, meaning that their car had a gestation period of less than 6 months. With that in mind, being as close to the pace and as reliable as they were in the early part of the season was a remarkable achievement. OK, they didn't gain any ground on the other teams after the season start, but given the development rate in Formula 1 and the fact that Lotus decided half way through the season to concentrate on next year's car, this is not unexpected. I'm not going to get into the name argument here as it's the longest, duller and most confusing conflict you will ever read about, but given how the team has performed this year and how they have the blessing of Colin Chapman's son Clive, who heads Classic

Team Lotus, I think they are fully deserving of the name.

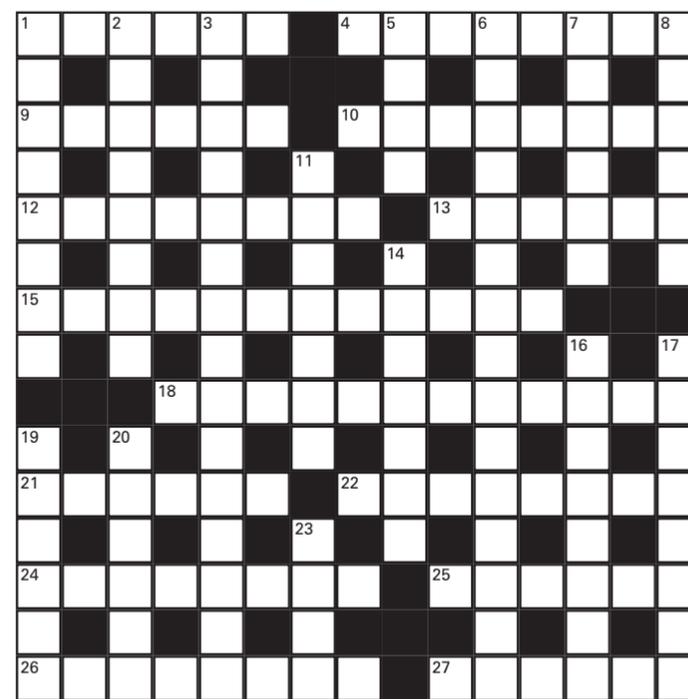
Virgin Racing, a combination of successful sportscar designer Wirth Research and multiple Formula 3 championship winners Manor Motorsport also managed a solid effort. Yes, the fuel tank mistake was embarrassing, but it was the result of an inexperienced team pushing the limits of then unconfirmed regulations and was quickly sorted once discovered. The team experienced reliability problems in the early part of the season, but nothing worse than Sauber, whose car was designed with the benefits of significant funding from BMW.

HRT: ok, I'll give you that, they were pretty rubbish, but considering their budget for the entire year was around 38 pence, the fact that they started every race is pretty commendable. HRT were using chassis designed by Dallara, who are the dominant constructor in several sub-F1 race series, again proving that even for the best, Formula 1 is difficult to succeed in.

Still, could be worse: USF1, the fourth accepted entry managed no more than several million press releases, resulting in a surprisingly accurate parody, which revolved around the idea that the team spent all of their time building toasters instead of cars.

So, to summarise the new teams, I believe they have all done a very good job this year, considering their comparatively low budgets, inexperience at the top level and the short period between the acceptance of their entries and the first race, in which they had to design and build their cars from scratch.

Cryptic Crossword 1,477



Across

- Charge for excerpts from Mandarin dictionary (6)
- Rewrite happiest tomb inscriptions (8)
- Still at home, perhaps, like batsman that hasn't been dismissed yet (3-3)
- Vera and I, our elusive parting in French (2,6)
- Wipes out hospital inside eastern parts of church (8)
- Open my copy of Little Dorrit, for example (6)
- Being like 23-5, oddly, isn't uncommon (3-9)
- Breathe fresh life into confused Nigerian voter, having lost direction (12)
- Immerse student in sarcastic books, disappearing (6)
- Pope's initial excitement if Bacon is rewritten (8)
- Instigator gets silver - traitor upset (8)
- Repeatedly affirms following, like Saint Francis (6)
- Citizen that does not migrate (8)
- New mitre requested by high priest? Not priest but ascetic (6)

Down

- Harmless pope (8)
- Aligns and arrests entertaining Russian leader (8)
- Anglo-French duchy almost completely decimated as a result of fallout with 6 (6,2,7)
- See 23
- Unorthodox apotheosis? Stormily elect to papal office (3,9,3)
- Mythical murderess liable to catch cold (6)
- Economise on seafood that's (partly) gone cold (6)
- Unite around liberal pope (7)
- At home, big object, we hear, adapted for cutting perhaps (7)
- Portray man as pig in primitive religion (8)
- Pope displayed Benn's unfinished decree (8)
- Sacrificial part of church built around Ionic capital found in the Summer Triangle (6)
- Caesar as pope (6)
- Two popes join 6's last incumbent (4,4)

Want to know how you did last week? Go to the Puzzles section >>

Fixtures & Results

in association with

Saturday 4 December	Wednesday 8 December	FENCING	Women's 2nd 5	Men's 3rd 7	Saturday 11 December	Sunday 12 December	Wednesday 15 December
WATER POLO Women's 1st 4 University of Warwick 1st 4	BADMINTON Men's 1st 7 University of Portsmouth 1st 1	Men's 2nd 110 University of Hertfordshire 1st 96	Buckinghamshire New University 1st 6	University of Chichester 2nd 25	FOOTBALL ULU Men's 2s vs Imperial Medicals 3s	FOOTBALL ULU Women's 1s vs King's College 2s	Badminton Men's 2s vs University of Hertfordshire 2s
Monday 6 December BASKETBALL ULU Men's 1st Royal Holloway 1st	Men's 2nd 6 University of Hertfordshire 94 2nd 2 59	Men's 3rd 85 St Mary's 1st 135	LACROSSE Men's 1st 11 University of Hertfordshire 1st 6	Women's 1st 5 Middlesex University 1st 56	Men's 3s vs Imperial Medicals 2s	HOCKEY Men's 1s vs Imperial Medicals 1s	FENCING Men's 2s vs King's College 1s Women's 2s vs Brunel 1s
NETBALL ULU Women's 1st King's College 1st	Women's 1st 0 University of Hertfordshire 1st 8 34 25	Women's 1st 18 King's College 1st 5	Women's 1st 18 King's College 1st 5	SQUASH Women's 1st 0 University of Sussex 1st 4	Men's 4s vs Imperial Medicals 5s	RUGBY ULU Women's 1s vs King's College 1s	FOOTBALL Men's 2s vs University of Portsmouth 4s Men's 3s vs Buckingham New University 6s
WATER POLO ULU Mixed 1st 8 UCL 1st 7	Men's 1st 118 University of Hertfordshire 2nd 42	Men's 3rd 4 St Bart's 2nd 1	Women's 2nd 34 Universities at Medway 1st 47	TABLE TENNIS Men's 2nd 14 University of Kent 2nd 3	Men's 5s vs Imperial Medicals 4s	Monday 13 December VOLLEYBALL ULU Mixed 1s vs King's College 1s	Women's 1s vs Buckingham New University 1s
		Men's 4th 1 University of Westminster 1st 2	RUGBY UNION Men's 2nd 27 LSE 1st 17	Friday 10 December SQUASH ULU Men's 3s vs King's College 2s Women's 1s vs LSE 1s	Men's 6s vs Royal Holloway 6s		



Another Equestrian win

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Rugby 2s back on track

David Wilson

Rugby Union

Imperial 2s 27 - 17 LSE 1st

Imperial 2s got their season back on track with a moral boosting victory over LSE 1st team. The 2nd XV had been without a win in the league this season but earned the result this week after tiring out the LSE forwards and scoring their tries by cutting through the opposition's back line with lethal precision.

The match was played in perfect conditions at Harlington, but Imperial went a penalty behind before they found their rhythm going into half time sitting comfortably. The team knew that they needed to build on their promising first half performance and put a respectable score on LSE, a team who offered a lot of bulk up front but little attacking threat.

LSE started the second half better and caught Imperial on the break, who still appeared to have their minds on their half time break. Good work by the front row put pressure on the LSE scrum which was consistently disrupted. Imperial secured a much needed victory which the team aim to build on in the new year.

Netball beat dirty, cheating King's Medics

Bernice Marie Cutler

Netball

Imperial 1s 34 - 25 King's Medicals 1s

Taking on medics at netball is always a daunting task and coming up against King's Medics was no different to the norm. Tensions were high amongst the girls before the game had even got underway due to the umpires running late however, the team soon found their rhythm once the match began.

The whistle blew and the match opened with

some good passes from both teams with our shooters Tamar and Nicole on form as always. In the words of GKT "there is nothing that can be done about that shooter!". Standards slipped slightly as GKT took the lead but we soon gained that back with some impressive spirit and teamwork. As Bernice was celebrating her 21st birthday, the team knew that the option of losing and ruining her big day was not an option.

The match continued with IC playing a fantastic game throughout, reminding GKT of the rules when perhaps they had forgotten them. Hard, ac-

curate passes meant that we maintained possession leading to our eventual win.

During the match there were a few disagreements between GKT and one of our umpires, so our opposition decided to play dirty. The IC girls were able to step up to this challenge with fantastic interceptions as always from WDs Rachel Zaborski and Sorcha Cotter aiding our winning campaign.

As the final ball was thrown to the GKT semi-circle our GD, Bernice, and their GA went for the ball...Well, Bernice went for the ball; the GA decided that the aim of netball is to take out the op-

position.

With a crunch of an ankle and a bang of a hip, Bernice went down furiously uttering the words "if this means I can't wear heels on Friday!" (for you that don't know that is when the Netball Christmas Dinner is!) Nice to know that even with an icepack expertly strapped to her pink socks with selotape, which had been carefully applied by Sorcha Cotter, Bernice knows her priorities!

With the match over and the umpires paid, Bernice hobbled off to spend the rest of her 21st Birthday in style at Chelsea and West A & E.

BUSINESS



An introduction to Islamic Finance:

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COMMENT



Is Christmas just for Christians?:

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ARTS



Original writing on display at Imperial:

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TRAVEL



Relive Garland's "The Beach" in Koh Phi Phi:

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HANGMAN



College declares "Plants do not exist":

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